

## Five Times Tommy Was an Anomaly and One Time He Wasn't

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# **Five Times Tommy Was an Anomaly and One Time He Wasn't**

by [teeth\\_eater](#)

## Summary

Tommy Innit is a very normal kid. He has friends, a warm bed to sleep in at night, and three square meals a day.

The only odd thing about him is that he has been sorta-kinda adopted into a family of space-traveling aliens. Oh, and the fact that humans are seen as the boogeymen of space. He's doing his best to prove to his crew that humans aren't that weird, but maybe they kind of have a point.

## Notes

HELLO!

welcome back to human error! this is the second installment :] go and read Home Again, Home Again, if you'd like context.

no warnings for this chapter

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

## Poison

It doesn't take more than a few days after being freed from his cell that Tommy starts demanding tours of the ship. Specifically the kitchen and all the things in it. When he had been stealing from the ship's food supply before he had been captured by the ragtag crew aboard the Sleepy Bois Inc, he had just grabbed whatever he could get his hands on, and if it made him sick he would draw it as a reminder not to steal it again.

He holds these papers now, a bit crumpled with age, as he had first drawn most of them a month ago, but still mostly legible. Philza tells him the names of the foods he had drawn and Tommy scribbles them down. He's sure his written Common is terrible, but he doesn't need more than phonetic spelling to understand what's going to make him puke his guts out and what's not.

Philza stretches, rattling his feathers.

"Do you know which chemicals *will* kill you?" Phil asks. Tommy gives him a suspicious look, causing the Elytrian to hold up his clawed hands placatingly.

"Just so I know what *not* to put in your food," The captain says with a smile. "I have no interest in hurting you, Tommy."

He seems sincere enough, so Tommy hums thoughtfully as he tries to recall the names of all the more common poisons, though he supposes chemical composition would be more helpful. Maybe Tubbo would know them.

"Let me write them down so I can get the chemical formula later," Tommy says, grabbing his papers. "Let me think, uh... cyanide is deadly, arsenic too, uh, carbon monoxide, but that's a type of gas so I don't think that counts. Maybe just don't put any common alien poisons in my food and I should be fine."

"I think Tubbo can translate these into chemical formulas, can I see the paper?"

Tommy hands the crumpled paper to the- to *his* captain and follows him as he walks briskly towards the ship's main body. Phil brings up his communicator to his ear and it buzzes with static for a few seconds before Tubbo's voice patches through.

"Where are you, mate?" Phil asks. Tubbo sighs, voice tinny through Phil's battered comm.

"Not even a hello? Always business with you." Tubbo sighs, feigning sadness.

"Hush now, Tommy and I are trying to figure out what chemical compounds will kill him so I don't accidentally poison him at dinner."

"Ah, in that case, I'm in Wilbur's lab," Tubbo says before the comm crackles into silence. Tommy shoves down the cold rush of fear at the idea of going to Wilbur's lab and follows on Phil's trail, doing his best to keep up a jovial conversation. Anything to keep away the thoughts of needles and scalpels and-

Tommy takes a deep breath. No, that's not the kind of person Wilbur is. He *needs* to do this. He needs to prove to both himself and everyone else that he is brave, unaffected by his past. Stable enough to be set free.

They make it to the door of Wilbur's lab without much issue. It's pretty unassuming considering the no doubt important work that takes place inside, just a metal sliding door with a sign that Tommy can't read. It probably says something about not entering the lab, but hey- if it was meant for Tommy then Wilbur would have written it in English.

"What's up fuckers?" Tommy bellows as he slams the door open, making Wilbur shriek in surprise and nearly drop the sample he's holding. He catches it and fixes Tommy with a glare. Tommy snickers in lieu of an apology and walks over to stand by Tubbo's side, who high-fives him as he passes. Fist bumps had been quickly ruled out of their interactions after it slipped Tommy's mind that Tubbo has stingers on his knuckles. *That* had been a whole day of Tubbo panicking and Tommy trying to explain that Tubbo's venom *probably* wasn't deadly to him while trying to find an alien equivalent to Tylenol.

Tommy drapes himself over Tubbo's shoulders, another advantage of his height, and fixes Wilbur with a shit-eating grin. The Phantling's ears flick down in annoyance, but he just sighs and turns to Phil. Tommy marks another win on his mental tally of pissing people off.

"Why are you two in my lab, Phil?" Wilbur asks exasperatedly.

"Tubbo needs to translate the things I can't eat into chemical formulas. He just happened to be here." Tommy answers before Phil can. Wilbur takes a deep breath.

"And why did you need to burst in here like a maniac?"

"I felt like it," Tommy replies with a smug smile. Wilbur's tail thrashes as he whips around with a dramatic groan and continues on whatever it is that he's working on. Tommy sticks his tongue out once his back is turned, making Tubbo giggle.

Phil turns to them with a slightly strained smile.

"Alright you two, let's figure out how to not poison our newest crewmate," Phil says cheerfully, clapping his hands together.

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It takes nearly half an hour just for the three poisons that Tommy could think of off the top of his head to be translated into their chemical formula, and then another forty minutes of Tubbo reading out different things said to be deadly to humans and having Tommy confirm or deny. Usually, Tommy would be against giving out information about humanity. As much as he trusts Tubbo, he knows first-hand how knowledge can be weaponized, but he'd really rather not end up drinking the alien-equivalent of gasoline during breakfast.

Once all of the items Tubbo has written down in his book have been read out and annotated with Tommy's help, Tubbo slams the book shut with a sigh.

"Alright, that should be good. We'll just avoid those and any of the more common poisons. I think a lot of these are pretty universally deadly, so there isn't too much need to worry."

"Great," Tommy says with a groan, stretching his arms above his head and ignoring the aliens' general disgust at the popping of his bones. "Science was never my forte,"

"That's why we work so well together," Tubbo says, throwing an arm over Tommy's shoulder. The positioning is a bit awkward thanks to their height differences, but it works.

"Oh!" Tubbo says suddenly. "I forgot this is the first time you've been to the lab, let me show you around." Tommy wouldn't have been able to disagree if he wanted to, because Tubbo is already tugging him by the elbow to the different sections of the lab.

Tubbo seems to be most excited about the botany portion of the lab, an area cut off from the rest of the room by fogged-up glass walls. The moment they step into the greenhouse, Tommy nearly goes boneless with the relief of warm air. Who would have thought a spaceship would be so *cold*.

"This is the botany area," Tubbo explains, which Tommy could have guessed based on the ludicrous amount of greenery. "This is mostly where I work since I need to be around plants a lot for my health."

Tommy reaches out and brushes his fingers over the waxy leaf of one of the closer plants, it doesn't bite him like the alien plants in the movies, so that's a plus at least.

They spend a good twenty minutes in the greenhouse, Tubbo showing each plant to Tommy in great detail. Tommy thinks he's doing good by pretending to be interested, it's not like he's going to shoot Tubbo down when he's this excited about the plants, even if Tommy doesn't necessarily get it.

"So," He asks finally once Tubbo takes a breath. "Which one of these will get you high?"

As it turns out none of the plants are drugs, which Tommy plays up to be a major disappointment. Tubbo cracks up at the scandalized look on Phil's face when Tommy suggests trying all of them and seeing if any of them got humans high.

"Then there's chemicals over here," Tubbo says. "That's what Wilbur works on, though he mostly does drug synthesizing." Tommy raises his eyebrows at that and Tubbo elbows him in the side. "Not those kinds of drugs, stupid. He makes like...supplements. So if someone can't get a vitamin they need in space they don't have to go without."

"Oh," Tommy says. "That's actually...kind of cool." It's also a lot less ominous than the work he had assumed Wilbur did. He had come here half expecting to see dissections in progress, but it seems like most of the science Wilbur does is... helpful. It's a weight off of Tommy's shoulders, one that he hadn't even known was there.

Tubbo is giving him a curious look at his sudden pensiveness, so Tommy snaps back to attention, eyes darting around to find something that will change the subject.

"What's that?" Tommy asks, pointing at a small brown bottle in a cabinet.

"Oh," Tubbo says, eyes darting over to Wilbur. "That's some really scary stuff."

Now that's a way to pique Tommy's curiosity if there ever was one.

"What is it?" Tommy asks, leaning forward to get a better look at the small bottle.

"It's a methylxanthine class drug,"

"I'm not even going to pretend to know what that means," Tommy says, getting a dirty look from Tubbo for interrupting.

"And it causes irregular heartbeats, dehydration, fever, seizures—"

"Shit, that *does* sound serious."

"It is. That's not the worst part though," Tubbo says, leaning forward like he's telling a scary story. "Torturers use this stuff because of the symptom it's most known for."

"What?" Tommy asks, getting interested despite himself.

"It causes insomnia, like really bad insomnia. You won't be able to sleep for *days* after taking it, and if they keep administering it, the victims just get more and more exhausted, but aren't able to sleep. It's enough to drive anyone crazy."

"Holy shit, that stuff sounds crazy illegal," Tommy says, leaning away from the bottle.

"It is, but hey, it's illegal for you to be here too."

"Fair," Tommy says, eyeing the numbers scrawled underneath the bottle. "Hey, what's the chemical formula for this one?"

"Uh...gimme a second. Oh! It's C8H10N4O2." Tubbo says. Tommy frowns, something sparking at the back of his mind.

"Shit, that sounds really familiar," Tommy says, closing his eyes and trying to think back to tenth-year chemistry.

"They have it on Earth, I'm pretty sure," Tubbo says. "It was on the list of common poisons."

"What's the English name?"

"Uh...caffeine." Tubbo says, flipping through his book.

There is a long pause, and Tubbo looks up at him curiously.

"What?"

"You're fucking kidding me," Tommy says flatly.

"No?" Tubbo says, tilting his head. "That's what it is, I'm pretty sure."

"You said that was a torture device!"

"It is!" Tubbo insists.

"Fuck that, give it to me," Tommy says, reaching for the bottle. Tubbo smacks his hand away.

"What? Dude, no!" Tubbo says, bewildered.

"Tubboooooo," Tommy whines, going boneless against the counter. "I haven't caffeine in so longgggg..."

"Tommy... oh fuck." Tubbo says, looking horrified. "I knew the other ship was bad but... oh, and I read it could be addictive if you lived through the doses." He says, wings fluttering in a way that Tommy has learned means he's anxious.

"What are you talking about," Tommy asks, bewildered.

"They gave you caffeine?"

"No?" Tommy says, taking a step back. "I wish they did, it would have made it a little more bearable."

"Don't say that, it's not funny," Tubbo says with a frown. Wilbur and Phil seem to have noticed Tubbo's anxiety and are walking toward the two teenagers with matching concerned expressions.

"It's not meant to be funny," Tommy says. "You were the one joking about it being a torture device."

"I wasn't joking!" Tubbo insists.

Phil steps in between them, halting any arguments that may take place should tensions rise any higher.

"Boys, boys," He says placatingly. "What's going on?"

"Tommy's addicted to caffeine," Tubbo says, pointing a finger at Tommy. The human gasps dramatically, putting a hand to his chest.

"I am *not*," Tommy says emphatically. "Maybe I was on Earth, but I've been off it so long there's no way-

"What?" Phil yelps, feathers fluffing up as he hovers his clawed hands around Tommy as though the human is suddenly going to drop dead.

"No fucking way," Wilbur says, ears pointing downward.

"Why is everyone making such a big deal out of this?" Tommy groans. "I'd have to drink like six-hundred milliliters to start feeling like shit, and maybe *double* that to kill me."

The aliens clustered around him nervously all pause.

"Huh?" Tubbo says weakly.

"You're fucking lying," Wilbur says, leaning forward with a spark of curiosity.

"I am *not*!" Tommy snaps, bristling at the accusation.

"Oh yeah, then drink it. Right now." Wilbur says smugly, crossing his arms, secure in the knowledge that there's no way Tommy would actually knowingly drink poison.

Tommy snatches the bottle off of the shelf and chugs the whole thing, much to everyone's immediate dismay.

"See bitch!" Tommy says, making a face at the taste of the chemical.

"Holy shit I didn't think you'd actually drink it," Wilbur hisses, snatching the bottle out of the human's hand and peering inside of it to see that the small brown bottle really had been drained. Wilbur pales further, looking up at the human, a little surprised to see him still standing.

"Tommy holy shit, why would you do that," Phil sputters, trying to get Tommy to sit down.

"Wilbur told me to!" Tommy whines.

"I was *joking*!" Wilbur wails when Tubbo and Philza both shoot him a dirty look.

"How was I supposed to know that, bitch." Tommy says, throwing his arms into the air in exasperation.

"Because drinking a random bottle of poison is a *stupid* thing to do!" Wilbur shouts.

"Boys!" Philza barks, still holding onto Tommy as though he's going to drop dead any second, which is actually a possibility right now based on what he'd just done. "We can't stand here and argue, we need to go get Tommy's stomach pumped."

Tommy makes a face, shoving Phil's hands off of him.

"Hell no, I hate getting my stomach pumped." He whines. Phil gives him an incredulous look.

"Would you rather *die*?" He asks with forced patience. "Because that's the other option."

"Ugh..." Tommy says, pretending to weigh his options. "How much caffeine was that?"

"Like four-hundred milliliters!" Tubbo says, a bit hysterically.

"Oh, that's fine, then." Tommy says dismissively. Tubbo whacks him on the back of the head with a scowl.

"Stop being stubborn!" Tubbo hisses, his worry for the younger boy poorly veiled.

"I'm being serious!" Tommy whines, holding the back of his head. "I'll be fine, it'll probably even make me feel better! Yeah four-hundred is a little much, it's not gonna kill me."

Phil takes a deep breath and smoothes down his feathers.

"Okay, Tommy. We need to go down to the medbay." Phil says.

"But-"

"No arguments," Phil says sternly. Tommy's mouth snaps shut, though the human doesn't stop glowering at him. Thank the *gods* that humans at least have an ingrained respect for leadership. "We're going to scan your blood and vitals and if *necessary* we're going to have to pump your stomach."

"Fine," Tommy sighs, standing from his chair much to Tubbo's distress. "But I'm telling you, you're all being paranoid. I used to drink this stuff all the time back on Earth, everyone did."

"*Everyone*?" Wilbur asks incredulously as they walk briskly towards the medbay.

"Yeah, pretty much. I think some religions are against it because it's *technically* a drug, but it's super common."

"Okay," Phil says, turning around. "So this- so caffeine is a *drug* for humans. A recreational one?"

"Not really?" Tommy says, scrunching up his face. "It doesn't get you high or anything, but it gets you all jazzed."

"What?" Tubbo asks, hands still hovering over Tommy to catch him if he collapses.

"Like- well, it hasn't kicked in yet, but it's going to make me all energized in about ten minutes."

"Gods- wait, so it just... gives you a boost? That's it?" Wilbur asks incredulously.

"Yeah, pretty much. I thought Tubbo was joking when he said it was a torture device."

"You can sleep after you've had it?" Phil asks worriedly.

"Yeah? Some people can, some can't, but it won't keep you up for more than a few hours." Tommy says. Phil hums worriedly.

"I still want to check your vitals, mate," Phil says, concern lessened by Tommy's explanation, but not gone.

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"That's fair," Tommy says easily.

So it turns out, four-hundred milliliters of caffeine in a human who hadn't had a drop of the stuff in months is a recipe for disaster. Once his vitals had been confirmed to be normal, Tommy wandered off under the watchful eye of Tubbo, who got Phil as soon as Tommy's leg started bouncing uncontrollably. The human assured Tubbo that it was a harmless side effect, but Tubbo insisted on getting their captain anyway, much to Tommy's chagrin.

Once Phil proclaimed him to have a clean bill of health for the second time in an hour, Tommy started getting restless. He needs to *move* !

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It takes, as promised, three hours for Tommy to crash, much to the relief of his fellow crewmates, who had been following him around making sure the human didn't get into *too* much trouble while he tried to burn off the excess energy from the caffeine.

At the end of it all, Tommy lay sleeping on their couch with only a *little* bit of damage done to the ship. Phil, Wilbur, and Tubbo collapse in the chairs across from where their resident human lies, all three of them exhausted through completely non-chemical means, thank you.

"We are never letting him touch that stuff again," Wilbur hisses through his teeth.

"Agreed," Tubbo and Phil say in tandem.

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As it turns out, Tommy is *fantastic* at nagging, because he *somehow* convinced Phil to allow him one-hundred milligrams of caffeine a day, much to the exasperation of his other crewmates. Thankfully, the amount the human drinks in a day doesn't seem to make him hyper. It doesn't seem to do more than stop him from glowering at everyone in the morning.

Techno returns from where he had been exploring planet-side the next day, blank-faced as always, but still clearly confused at the exhaustion of Wilbur, Tubbo, and Phil and the uncharacteristic chipperness of Tommy.

Phil pulls him aside and tells him to never, under any circumstances, drink anything Tommy leaves on the counter.

# Sleepwalking

## Chapter Summary

hello!!

cw:  
malnourishment  
minor foot injury

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Technoblade is the sole security officer aboard the Sleepy Bois' Inc, which means when weird things happen, it's his job to notice and act accordingly. So obviously, when his portable motion sensor buzzes, alerting him to movement in the halls, he snaps awake immediately and groggily checks the cameras.

It's Tommy, walking through the main body of the ship. Techno sighs and moves to go back to bed, but pauses when he registers the strangeness of the human's motions. He's walking very slowly, which is especially odd for Tommy, who never moves slow. He's always walking like he's got somewhere to be.

Now, though, he moves like he's wading through water. He will pause like he's forgotten what he's supposed to be doing, and then turn and walk in another direction at seemingly random intervals.

Techno rumbles concernedly deep in his throat, and then heads for the door, hand on his taser. He isn't gonna use lethal force on the little idiot, but something is clearly off about the human tonight, and Techno isn't going to let himself get his throat torn out if the human is possessed or something.

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Technoblade walks as quickly as he dares into the main body of the ship, hand not once leaving the weapon on his hip. He enters the kitchen to see Tommy holding a bowl in both his hands and staring at the wall.

"Tommy?" Technoblade asks, stepping forward. The human's head swivels towards him, the blank look in his blue eyes making the Piglin step back again.

"Hello?" Tommy asks, looking straight through Techno. "How do you know my name?"

Techno silently thanks Tubbo for teaching him English, because whatever is happening to Tommy, he is clearly in no state to speak Common.

"It's me, Techno. You... you didn't get into any of Wilbur's potions did you?" Techno asks in his best English. Tommy blinks a couple of times.

"I was asking about the..." Tommy trails off, eyes going blank again. He doesn't try to finish his train of thought, though Techno is just glad he's not wandering around anymore. Techno creeps forward. If he can grab the flighty human he can strongarm him to the medbay and yell for Phil until the Elytrian shows up.

"Okay, why don't you come with me, Tommy. Let's go figure out what's happening." Techno says as calmly as he can manage, which isn't hard thanks to his natural monotone voice.

"No, no, I want to stay. The sky is so pretty here." Tommy says, stepping back from Techno's advances. Techno looks up at the ceiling. It is still as dull and grey as ever, maybe even greyer in the dim light.

"Okay, I bet the sky is even prettier where I'm going," Techno says. He has a feeling grabbing Tommy isn't going to go over well, his best bet is going to be convincing the human to follow him of his own free will, however clouded that may be.

"Okay," Tommy says, and then drops the bowl he had been holding onto the kitchen floor. It shatters, of course, making Techno curse and jump back. Tommy doesn't react at all, only takes a step forward. Techno instantly smells blood and realizes with irritation and a confusing tinge of worry that Tommy is barefoot, and humans certainly don't have hooves. Tommy tries to keep walking, but Techno puts a hand on his shoulder.

"Hold on, there's broken glass, let me carry you," Techno says. It may be a bit embarrassing to have to carry Tommy, but Techno doesn't want to deal with Phil's wrath if he let him walk all the way to the medbay with glass in his foot. Tommy blinks at him blankly, but doesn't resist when Techno scoops him into a bridal carry. Techno reels back a bit, not expecting the human to be as light as he was.

"What do you eat? Feathers?" Techno huffs as he adjusts Tommy in his arms.

"Yeah," Tommy says. Techno sighs and walks as fast as he can to the medbay. He doesn't want to use one arm to call Phil and risk dropping Tommy, and yelling for their captain will wake everyone, and the last thing Techno wants right now is a bunch of panicked bodies pressing in on him from all sides.

He resolves to call Phil when he gets to the medbay, only half-listening to Tommy's inane ramblings.

"It was waiting for us," Tommy whispers cryptically. Techno gives him an incredulous look.

"That's ominous."

"Next time we should bring a chef,"

"Okay."

They make it to the medbay without any grand disaster, and Tommy hasn't tried to attack him even once, which makes it a good day in Techno's opinion. Techno lays him down on a cot and the teenager immediately tries to get up. Techno lets out a long-suffering sigh and wrestles Tommy back onto his back. The human won't stop his struggling long enough for Techno to call Phil, so the Piglin grabs the restraints stored under the cot and pulls it over Tommy's arms, pinning the human in place before leaning back to grab his comm.

He doesn't get the chance to do anything with it before Tommy starts *screaming*. Techno drops the comm, which clatters on the ground. Techno ignores it, scrambling to check Tommy for blood or *something* that would make him scream like that. Phil is going to have his head if the human's heart spontaneously explodes or something.

Speaking of Phil, the Elytrian bursts into the room, slamming the doors open. His feathers are still ruffled with sleep and puffed out as far as they can go. He's not wearing his hat, so the feathers puffing up on his head make him look pretty ridiculous. The wild look in his eye stops Techno from laughing.

"What's happening?" Phil asks as he rushes to Tommy's side, rolling up the sleeves of his pajama shirt.

"I don't know!" Techno shouts over the human's shrieking, hands hovering over his thrashing form. "I woke up and he was walking around like he was haunted, he broke a dish and got glass in his foot so I carried him here... he wouldn't stay down so I restrained him to get you and he started-"

"Where's Tommy?" Tubbo shouts, slamming the doors open and making the two conscious crew members in the room jump in surprise. Tubbo doesn't wait for an answer before jetting to his friend's side, looking terrified. "Why the fuck is he tied up?"

"He has glass in his foot-" Techno starts, but Tubbo looks up at him with such an intense look that his mouth snaps shut.

"Untie him *now* ." Tubbo says, hands already moving. Phil takes the other side and Tommy is unbound in a matter of seconds.

As soon as the bindings are off, the human is up and off like a shot, tucking himself into a corner and wrapping his long arms over his head. Techno steps forward, wincing at the thought of how deeply the glass must be in his foot by now, but Tubbo holds an arm out to stop him. Tubbo shakes his head and walks to his best friend's trembling form. Techno doesn't try to follow.

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"Hi Tommy," Tubbo says, sitting in front of his friend. One blue eye peeks out from in between his arms, staring through him. "Do you know where you are?"

"Space," Tommy says raspily.

"Well that's a little vague," Tubbo says. "Where in space?"

"I didn't pay attention," Tommy says. Tubbo pauses at the strange answer. A fact he had learned about humans creeps into his memory.

"Tommy are you asleep right now?" Tubbo asks.

"I'm waiting, okay?" Tommy says, still staring through him. Tubbo sighs deeply, antennae drooping. Sleepwalking wasn't something he had considered. It had been covered so briefly in his classes, as it didn't happen to most healthy humans. Tubbo stares at Tommy's too thin limbs and shaking shoulders and thinks that maybe they should have covered sleepwalking a bit more. He tries to remember what to do, he knows they discussed this, he just needs to remember. Don't try waking them up, just guide them back to bed.

Tubbo stands and places a gentle hand on Tommy's forearm, tugging him up. He's not strong enough to lift Tommy, but the human gets up anyways.

"Come with me, Tommy," Tubbo says softly. Once Tommy is standing, Tubbo slides his hand down to hold around his wrist. His hand is able to fully circle Tommy's wrist, which he knows is... bad. He shakes his head. He can deal with that once Tommy is back in bed and *actually* sleeping.

Tubbo guides Tommy back to the cot, ignoring Phil and Techno's worried glances. Wilbur is standing in the doorway, giving him a look that's equal parts confused and concerned. Tubbo didn't hear him come in, but that's not surprising, as Phantling's move near silently.

'What's going on?' Wilbur moushes to Phil. Tubbo doesn't bother listening in. He sets Tommy up on the cot, holding him in place when he starts to list to one side. Tubbo nods his head to Phil with a pointed look, and the captain lets out a small chirp of realization and scrambles for the small medical kit sitting on the counter next to him.

"He's sleepwalking," Tubbo explains, keeping his voice light and amicable. Tommy probably isn't processing his words, but he certainly will understand tone.

"He's asleep?" Wilbur asks, bewildered, and Tommy twitches back, blinking a few times. Tubbo gives Wilbur a look.

"Yes, so speak gently. Once we get the glass out of his foot I'm gonna get him to lie down. He should fall back into regular sleep after that."

"Is this... normal for humans?" Phil asks, kneeling down at Tommy's feet with a long pair of tweezers. Technoblade holds his legs down so he won't kick Phil in the face. Everyone in the room watches the teenager to see if he is going to start screaming again, but he only sways in place with wide eyes.

Phil starts removing the glass as gently as he can, setting the pieces aside on the tray. Tommy doesn't react at all, doesn't even seem to feel it, which is a relief to everyone in the room.

It only takes a few minutes for Philza to remove all the glass from their resident human's foot, and by then Technoblade has left to sweep up the remaining glass in the kitchen. Once Phil wraps his friend's foot, dresses the friction burns from where he had strained against his bindings, and throws away the bloodied bits of glass, Tubbo takes his friend's hand and starts to guide him down the hall and back to their shared room. Tommy had quickly decided he absolutely hated sleeping alone, though he kept his original room and spent a lot of time there during the day. Tubbo dismisses his crewmate's questions, insisting he would tell them in the morning once they had all gotten more sleep.

Tubbo stands outside of the door to his room, taking a deep breath to steady himself before pushing the door open and guiding Tommy to the bed. Tommy collapses onto the mattress without much prompting, and almost immediately seems to fall back into real sleep. Tubbo sighs in relief, lying down next to him. The human immediately curls into him, making Tubbo laugh quietly at his friend's cuddliness.

Tubbo doesn't sleep much, too worried that when he fell back asleep he'd once again wake up to the sound of Tommy screaming and gone from where he had been. He keeps an eye on his friend, waiting for him to rise from the bed again with that blank look in his eye.

---

When morning comes, Tommy is still sleeping soundly. Tubbo stays awake until Tommy stretches, which is the sign that he's starting to wake up. The human's eyes open and Tubbo breathes a sigh of relief that he actually seems to *see* Tubbo.

"Tubbo?" Tommy says around a yawn. "You look like shit, you have a nightmare?"

"You don't remember?" Tubbo asks, voice scratchy. Tommy frowns, sitting up.

"Remember what?" He asks, before his eyes catch on the stark white bandages on his wrists.  
"Woah, what the fuck happened to my arms."

"You were sleepwalking," Tubbo says, burying his face in his pillow to protect his eyes from the hall lights.

"Was I?" Tommy asks, frowning. "I didn't think I did that. Why are my arms all fucked up?"

Tubbo hesitates. Tommy isn't going to like the answer, but he deserves to know.

"You hurt your foot and wouldn't stop walking around so Techno tried to restrain you, but you struggled a bunch and hurt yourself," Tubbo says, doing his best to sound casual.

"Oh," Tommy says quietly.

"Techno didn't know, he wouldn't have-"

"I know, I know. I'm not- I'm not mad at him." Tommy says, pushing his hair out of his face.  
"Let's go have breakfast."

Tubbo pretends not to notice the blatant change in subject and gets up with a groan to follow his friend to the dining hall. Tommy notices his exhaustion and winces.

"Unless you'd rather go back to bed, I'm sure you need the sleep after spending the night looking after my sorry ass."

"Don't say that," Tubbo says with a frown. "I'd rather be tired and have you be safe."

"Yeah, well- whatever. Bitch." Tommy says, and though he turns his head Tubbo can see redness creeping up the back of his neck. It makes him smile.

---

Breakfast consists of several different food items, which tells Tubbo that Phil's been anxious. There is palpable tension around the table, no matter how much everyone tries to ignore it, and eventually, Tubbo sighs with resignation.

"Okay, we need to talk about what happened last night," Tubbo says firmly. Tommy shrinks in his seat, and Tubbo winces internally. "Tommy, no one's mad at you, okay?" Tommy gives him a thumbs-up, which Tubbo has learned is a non-verbal way of expressing approval. Tubbo takes that as his cue to continue.

"Tommy was sleepwalking, like I said last night. He doesn't remember anything that happened and he can't control it."

"I'm assuming this isn't a normal behavior," Phil says. Tubbo dips his head in a nod, another gesture he'd picked up from Tommy.

"It-" Tubbo pauses and looks to Tommy for permission to continue talking. The human nods. "It generally happens to humans who are... well, under a lot of stress."

Tommy clenches his jaw and looks down at the floor.

"Oh," Phil says quietly. "Is there a way to stop it?"

"Locking the bedroom door," Tommy says shortly, not looking at any of them. "I'm pretty sure I sleepwalked while I was in the cell, I kept waking up in random spots, but I couldn't leave so... you know." Tommy shrugs like he doesn't care, though the tenseness of his body language screams distress.

"Well, we're not doing that," Phil says firmly, making Tommy look up at the captain with wide eyes.

"What?"

"If stress causes sleepwalking, locking you up is only going to make it worse. It's off the table."

Tubbo breathes a sigh of relief, and Tommy's shoulders relax.

"Oh," He breathes, sounding a bit choked up. "Cool."

"We'll figure this out," Wilbur says with a small smile. "If all else fails I'm sure I could make something strong enough to knock you out for the night."

"Hell yeah, space Ambien!" Tommy says through laughter.

"Stop offering him drugs," Techno says gruffly, though his tail is waving back and forth, betraying his good humor.

"Don't be a buzzkill," Tommy groans. The tension at the table is broken as a playful argument starts, minor injuries and late-night screaming all but forgotten.

---

When night arrives again, the nerves are back. Tommy sits on the bed and stares into the middle distance for a while.

"What did the wall ever do to you," Tubbo jokes as he sits. Tommy jumps, having not heard Tubbo come into the room.

"Huh?" The human asks, blinking a few times to clear his vision.

"What's on your mind?" Tubbo asks, lying down.

"I'm... what if I sleepwalk again?"

"Then someone will bring you back to bed," Tubbo says easily.

"What if I attack one of you?"

"What if the world was made of pudding?"

"What?" Tommy asks, turning to him.

"No matter how many what-ifs you think of, you still have to sleep. There's no avoiding that." Tubbo says as he wraps himself in blankets. Tommy hums, still looking upset.

"You've never hurt any of us, Tommy. Even when you were out of it or panicking, you never hurt us." Tubbo reminds him.

"This is different, though," Tommy says, picking at his nails nervously. "I don't even remember what I do, I have no control."

"You're still you, even when you're asleep," Tubbo says. Tommy is quiet for a few seconds.

"Whatever," He says, flopping down onto his pillow. "I'm too tired for this shit. If I jump you I give you full permission to shoot me or whatever."

Tubbo frowns at the half-hearted joke and wishes Tommy goodnight.

---

Tubbo wakes up to a lack of a human snoring next to him, and is immediately snapped into alertness. He sits up and throws his blankets off of himself, getting to his feet. He opens his mouth to shout for Tommy, hoping he had just gotten up to get a drink or something, and immediately slams into a warm body.

Tubbo freezes and looks up at Tommy, who is staring at him with that same blank stare from last night.

"Tommy, go back to bed," Tubbo says softly. Tommy doesn't respond, he just turns around and goes back to what he was doing, which was apparently... folding the spare blankets. Well, Tubbo supposes it's better than shattering dishes and getting hurt.

"What'cha doin'?" Tubbo asks as calmly as he can manage.

"Packing," Tommy says sleepily.

"Okay," Tubbo says, putting a hand on Tommy's arm and pulling him back onto the bed. Tommy goes without much resistance, falling back asleep much easier than he had before.

Tubbo lies down next to him, mind rushing. He can probably get Wilbur to design something for Tommy to wear that will beep when he gets up at night. Some sort of bracelet. They'll figure this out, it'll just take some adjusting.

Tommy had been through hell and back, it would be impossible for him to be unaffected by the things that he had seen on the other ship. It's all Tubbo can do to help him manage. Things are probably never going to be the way they were on Earth again, not for Tommy, but Tubbo wants to help him be as happy as he can be out here in space. Even if that means losing out on a bit of sleep to make sure Tommy doesn't walk into an open airlock.

“Goodnight Tommy,” Tubbo whispers. Tommy doesn't respond beyond mumbling something unintelligible. It's good enough.

#### Chapter End Notes

thank you for reading! If you liked this leave a comment! it is how to get me to update faster!!! also if you like this au check out my tumblr in the below authors note

# Head Scratches

## Chapter Summary

a very fluffy this one. also very long, so perhaps that makes up for the wait.

chapter warnings:  
dissociative flashback

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It begins, as many of Tommy's misadventures aboard the Sleepy Boi's Inc do, with Tubbo's incessant desire for knowledge. He calls himself a scientist, Tommy calls him a nerd who asks too many questions.

"Why do you do that?" Tubbo asks from where he lays on his stomach.

"Do what?"

"Run your fingers through your hair like that," Tubbo clarifies. "You do it when you're thinking. Or nervous."

Tommy stares down at his hand. Sure enough, there are blonde strands of hair caught in between his fingers. He hadn't even realized he had been doing it.

"I don't know," Tommy says, stretching. "It's like...soothing. Humans will do it to each other when someone's upset or tired, I guess. It just feels nice." Tommy explains with a shrug. His best guess is that there's some leftover instinct from when humans used to groom each other, but he doesn't feel like explaining prehistoric social practices to Tubbo. Knowing him, the nerd would talk about that for *hours*.

Instead of going through *that* whole ordeal, Tommy lays his head on his folded arms and rests his eyes. He trusts Tubbo enough to keep an eye out for any space monsters that come their way. Or whatever.

Tommy startles when a hand finds its way into his hair, but quickly settles down when blunt fingernails scratch along his scalp. Tommy goes boneless despite himself, sighing deeply at the comforting feeling. He stiffens when he hears a small 'aww...' from Tubbo. *Wait a second.*

"Don't you 'aww' at me bitch!" Tommy barks, sitting up quickly. Tubbo giggles nervously, drawing his hand back.

"Sorry, sorry, but c'mon! You have to admit that's kind of adorable." Tubbo says with a teasing smile. Tommy grumbles, but can't keep his mouth from quirking up into a smile.

"I'll show you adorable, motherfucker." Tommy threatens, moving to stand up to get revenge on his friend. Probably by hiding one of his things on the top shelf. It isn't a super effective form of vengeance considering Tubbo can fly, but the thought is there.

Tommy doesn't manage to get to his feet before Tubbo's blunt nails are scratching at his scalp again. Tommy relaxes despite his best efforts, revenge plot all but forgotten as he dips his head to give Tubbo better access. Tommy ignores the small cooing noise Tubbo makes for both of their sakes. As humiliating as it is to be disarmed by *head scratches* of all things, it's been so, *so* long since someone has run their fingers through his hair.

Tommy's eyes slide shut and he goes limp against Tubbo, though he is careful not to put more weight on the smaller alien than he can handle. Tubbo 'aww's again, but Tommy doesn't care very much at the moment. Something is swelling in his chest, the feeling seeps out from his chest and wraps around Tubbo like a protective blanket. His mind buzzes, and his breathing stutters for a moment.

Tommy sits up, staring at Tubbo.

"Aw shit," Tommy says, pulling back.

"What?" Tubbo asks, antenna twitching in worry. "Did I overstep?"

"Fuckin'-" Tommy cuts himself off, leaning forward and pressing his head against Tubbo's shoulder. "Goddamnit."

" *What ?*" Tubbo asks, sounding slightly panicked now.

"Nothing," Tommy says after a long pause. "Keep scratching my head, bitch."

Tubbo frowns in confusion, but his hand goes back to Tommy's head. Tommy lets his best friend play with his hair, making small, pleased noises at the texture or when Tommy would

lean into him further.

Shit. Tommy recognizes this feeling. It wasn't one he felt often, only once before, when his cell neighbor had snuck him some food when he had been sick. It was the stupid instinct-driven part of his brain (the hind-brain, as Tubbo had lectured him about) that had seemingly decided of its own volition that Tubbo is *family* now. Somehow. Shit. Shit. *Shit*. What alien in their right mind would want to be family with a *human*? They aren't exactly a well-liked species among most space-faring races.

Tommy, despite his best efforts, ends up nearly dozing off. He is broken out of his near-slumber by the intercom crackling to life. Tommy jolts up, startled, nearly knocking heads with Tubbo. Phil's tinny voice rings out through the speakers.

"Dinnertime!" He says jovially. Tubbo and Tommy share a look, and then they are off like twin bullets, racing down the hall. They've made it a game to see who can get to the dining hall first, the winner getting the first pick of dessert.

Despite their vastly different physiology, they are pretty evenly matched in the speed department, what with Tommy's long legs, and Tubbo's flight. They often end up shoving each other to get the upper hand, though their playful races have only ended in injury once when Techno opened a door in front of Tommy before he was able to stop. Tommy had to teach Phil how to relocate a shoulder, and the crunch of the joint popping back into place accompanied by Tommy's muffled scream made the Elytrian need to lay down for a few minutes.

No matter how many times Phil 'bans' them from racing, they never really stop, and Phil doesn't have the heart to *actually* put any effort into stifling their fun. Even with his status as captain making him the only one the two teenagers will listen to, he doesn't want to 'stop them from living life', much to Wilbur and Techno's displeasure.

---

Tubbo wins the race to dinner this time, smirking at Tommy from the doorway while the human cusses and shakes his fist at his friend.

Things are normal for about a day before Tommy is reminded why he has his self-imposed rule about not telling aliens anything about human biology. Okay, maybe this isn't the *exact* reason this rule is in place, but his point stands.

He's getting riled up, as he often is, this time over the fact that Wilbur is *obviously* cheating at space-Monopoly. Well, it's technically called Brewtine, but the rules and concepts are similar enough to Monopoly that Tommy doesn't pay much attention to the distinction.

"Right, you're fuckin' corrupt!" Tommy barks, pointing a finger at the phantling, who holds his paper money up like a fan, smiling his too-many-toothed smile.

"Techno's been sitting right next to me this whole time," Wilbur says, pressing a clawed hand to his chest innocently. "He can vouch."

"I saw you slip him money, bitch! You bribed him!"

"You need to get your vision checked," Wilbur replies with a smirk.

"Oh that's it," Tommy says, rolling up his sleeves and moving to stand up from his chair. He doesn't even manage to get to his feet before there is a hand in his hair, scratching his scalp, and he sits back down heavily against his will. His eyes slip shut and he leans into the touch.

He doesn't process what's happened until Wilbur breaks the shocked silence.

"What the *fuck*," Wilbur says, sounding shellshocked. "He has an *off-button*?" Tommy opens his mouth to retort, but is silenced just as quickly when Tubbo's nails scratch over the crown of his head.

"Figured that out yesterday," Tubbo says, and Tommy can hear the smile in his voice, but the feeling of someone carding their fingers through his hair feels an awful lot like someone *caring* about him, and it makes his insides all gooey in a very not-manly way. Wait no, emotions are manly. Whatever, either way, it's embarrassing to be melting into a puddle over the game table. Tommy sits up with a groan, batting Tubbo's hands off of him and giving his best death glare to the aliens sitting around the table, which probably isn't that effective given his sudden sleepiness and ruffled hair. Wilbur is laughing at him unabashedly while Techno pretends to sip from his cup to hide a smile. Phil is perhaps the most irritating, both hands pressed to his throat in what Tommy has learned is a parental gesture for Elytrains.

"Oh shut up," Tommy grumbles, snatching up his fake money and moving his piece forward on the board.

"No one said anything, mate." Phil points out, eyes warm. Tommy rolls his eyes.

"I could practically *hear* your thoughts, so zip it."

---

The game carries on, and if Tommy is a little less aggressive throughout the rest of it then that doesn't mean anything.

Of course, because he lives with *this* crew of clusterfucks, the whole thing comes back to bite him in the ass. He had hoped, perhaps a bit too optimistically, that they had forgotten about the whole ordeal over space-Monopoly.

*Apparently*, they hadn't, which introduces a whole host of problems for Tommy.

This becomes clear when Tommy is helping Wilbur clean up the remnants of a small explosion. Not too much had been damaged in the initial blast, but the soot that stained the hallway outside the lab proved to be a problem. Tommy had been bribed into helping with promises of an extra dose of caffeine, which he plans on making Wilbur *regret* once the phantling is done ordering him around.

He's surprisingly...okay with being left alone with Wilbur. When he imagined it, he thought he'd be nervous, but it feels just like talking to any of the other crewmates. Wilbur had stopped wearing his white coat when he worked, he saw how skittish it made Tommy and switched it out for a dusty brown one instead. It was a bit scruffy, but Tommy thinks it has character.

"Man, this is worse than the last ship," Tommy complains as he scrubs the blackened walls. "And I have *crazy* scars from that."

Wilbur scrunches his face at that in what Tommy guesses is disgust, but Tubbo says joking about it means he's healing. Tommy thinks so too, or maybe he's just being too optimistic. Well, time heals all wounds, or at least that's what he's heard, he can be patient. Despite what all his primary school teachers said.

"How's your side coming alo-" Wilbur begins before being cut off by the intercom shrieking with feedback. Wilbur yowls and claps his hands over his long ears, but Tommy stands frozen, eyes wide. His mouth parts, but no noise comes out.

The intercoms on Dream's ship were loud and shrieky and he never understood a word they said. Mostly because they all spoke in Common, but also because of the poor quality.

The floor is cold. He was given sandals shortly after being freed from his cell aboard the Sleepy Boi's Inc but he isn't wearing them now, preferring to run barefoot through the metal halls or wear his own socks and mismatched shoes, but he wishes he hadn't forgone shoes today because the cold metal of the ship is biting into the pads of his feet and reminding him of things he really does not want to be reminded of. He can feel the vibration of someone speaking humming through the air, but the words aren't reaching his brain. He's with... he's with Wilbur, right.

He's probably scaring him. He needs to stop being so dramatic, it was just an intercom, he *knows* that. He's on the Sleepy Boi's Inc and he knows that too, so *why* does his chest feel so tight. He tries to shake himself free of the fog that's taken over, but nothing works. He feels like he's drifting out of his body, like his soul is a little bit to the left of where he's standing. It's a disorienting feeling, one he's unfortunately very familiar with.

He can't snap out of it. Shit, how long has he been standing here, frozen with a soapy rag in his hand? He must look like such an idiot, but no matter how hard he tries he can't get free-

There is a hand in his hair. Larger than Tubbo's and sharper too, the nails just barely enough to hurt. Tommy jolts slightly with a gasp, eyes still wide and unblinking. His face is wet, is he crying? The hand pulls away at his movement, and Tommy reaches out to find it again. The hand feels like it's the only real thing in the world right now and he *needs* someone here with him.

The hand settles hesitantly back onto his head. It pauses before slowly carding its fingers through his hair. Tommy leans into the touch, feeling the fog slowly recede. He blinks a few times, twitching his fingers as feeling returns to them.

He looks at Wilbur, who the hand is attached to. The phantling's already huge eyes are even wider with worry, tail lashing back and forth. His mouth is moving like he's speaking to

Tommy, and- oh, he should probably tune into that, huh?

"-get Tubbo? Or- or Phil?" He's asking, ears flicking worriedly. Tommy waves him off, throat too choked up to speak. Wilbur falls silent, but his hand doesn't leave his head, which Tommy appreciates, even if he won't say it out loud.

"Just... just stay?" Tommy asks, wincing at how small his voice sounds. Wilbur's concern softens and he opens his arms. According to Wilbur, phantlings don't really *do* hugs. What with their thin skin and numerous sharp edges full-on embraces are an accident waiting to happen. Still, though, Wilbur opens his arms to Tommy, knowing it would be a comfort to him. The thought makes something suspiciously hot creep its way up behind his eyes, and he blinks furiously to rid himself of the feeling before slotting himself into Wilbur's lap and letting the older alien scratch his sharp claws against his scalp.

By all accounts, it should be scary, what with how dangerous Wilbur's claws can be if he isn't careful, but of course, the phantling is. The sharpness of his nails is more *soothing* than anything, really. Tommy nearly dozes off, but is startled back to alertness when the intercom screeches again. The sound barely hits his ears before Wilbur has his hands over the sides of his head, blocking the noise. Tommy presses his hand's over Wilbur's, pressing them down further and curling into himself. If Wilbur feels the way he trembles he doesn't say anything about it.

The touch offsets the noise enough that it doesn't trigger another... flashback? He didn't feel like he was back on the last ship, but what else could something like that have been, and it's not like he can research PTSD up in space. Or get diagnosed with it, but honestly, Tommy kind of feels like that ship has long since sailed.

Wilbur relaxes once the noise is over, taking his hands away from Tommy's ears. He huffs in amusement before standing, sending Tommy careening to the floor, where he lets out an offended squawk.

"Shush gremlin child," Wilbur says with a wry smirk. "Danger's passed. Go get some water, I can finish cleaning by myself." Tommy narrows his eyes at him suspiciously.

"Our deal is still in place, right?" Tommy says, shifting his eyes around as though someone may be listening in to their conversation. Wilbur rolls his eyes, a gesture Tommy now regrets teaching him.

"Yes , I'll get you an extra dose of caffeine, now go. Play with Tubbo or something."

"We don't *play* , " Tommy snorts derisively, crossing his arms. "We *hang out*, cause' we're cool."

Wilbur gives him a look that tells Tommy he doesn't believe that in the slightest.

"Sure," He says, picking up his rag again. "Now get outta here before I start splashing you."

Tommy scurries out of the room before Wilbur can make good on that threat.

Once Tommy has rounded the corner and any hint of red and white are out of his vision, Wilbur pulls out his comm and punches in Phil's name.

"Hey dadza," Wilbur says, shifting so he holds his comm in between his ear and shoulder.

"You know, people used to call me Captain," Philza says, though Wilbur can hear the smile in his voice.

"Suck it up, *Captain* ." Wilbur teases, making Phil snort. "Do you know how to fix an intercom system?"

---

Technoblade is terribly overworked and remarkably underpaid. Well, maybe that last part's not true. He makes pretty good money to guard this ship, but he *is* being underpaid when his job is to babysit the resident human. Technically, he's not getting paid to do that at all. There has to be some sort of law against this. Maybe Techno should join a union.

Techno is broken out of his grand plan to usurp Phil by Tommy leaning all his weight on him with a groan. Techno is the only one sturdy enough for Tommy to use as a personal jungle gym, and he makes full use of that ability, much to Techno's displeasure.

"Techno, I'm *bored* ," Tommy groans, going boneless against Techno, clearly expecting the piglin to catch him. Techno does no such thing, letting the gangly human fall to the metal floor with a quiet 'oof'. Tommy glares up at him while Techno makes a quiet chuffing noise in his own version of a laugh.

"You," Tommy says firmly, pointing a finger at him. "Are a traitor."

"And *you* are a fugitive," Techno retorts, stepping over where the human lies. Tommy snorts humorlessly as he rolls over to get back to his feet.

"Yeah, don't remind me." He says, trotting a bit faster to catch up to Techno. "Hey! Stop walkin' so damn fast man, I'm tryna' have a conversation."

"And I'm trying to do my job," Techno replies gruffly.

"Ah-ha! I heard Phil before he left, your job is to keep an eye on me, so you have to hang out with me!" Tommy says with a shit-eating grin. Techno side-eyes him.

"*My* job," He says with an irritated sigh. "Is to keep pests and pirates from getting into the ship."

"Hm, kinda shit at your job then," Tommy says idly, brushing dust off of his shirt.

"Callin' yourself a pest?" Techno snorts.

"Uh, no ! (I)Obviously, I'm a *pirate* !" Tommy says, bristling.

"Sure," Techno drawls. "All pirates hide in the vents for a week and steal our food, that's one of the many properties of pirates."

"You're the one that's a *pig in a crown* ." Tommy retorts, crossing his arms like he's won the argument.

"I don't know what a pig is," Techno reminds him, continuing his patrol through the halls. Tommy follows after him, loudly trying to explain what a pig is.

Techno gets irritated with that pretty quickly, but ignoring the human only seems to make him think Techno is enraptured with his story about the time he went on a field trip to a farm and fell into a pigpen. Apparently, pigs eat humans, but whether or not that's an exaggeration is not something Techno particularly cares to find out.

Tommy takes a breath, apparently to get enough air to continue his story, and Techno turns around to glower at the young human. Tommy seems to take his annoyance as an incentive to continue, but Techno isn't here to stink-eye the human into submission. He remembers how Tubbo had settled him down during their admittedly pretty heated game of Brewtine. Techno reaches for Tommy, frowning slightly at the way the human's eyes widen and he flinches back. Techno runs his fingers through Tommy's hair, a bit hesitantly.

Tommy's head dips forward instantly, pressing further into his hand. Techno's mouth twitches up in a smile. Hook, line, and sinker. See, he's even learning human phrases. Techno keeps up his ministrations, scratching his hooved fingers along Tommy's scalp until the human's head is fully down and his eyes are drooping.

Techno pulls his hand away, which draws a whine out of Tommy, who leans forward and bumps his forehead against Techno's shoulder.

"Noooooo," Tommy complains. "That felt so niiiccceeee. Why'd you stop?"

"I only did it to stop you from blabbering," Techno says, head spinning a bit with the idea that Tommy trusts him enough to expose the back of his neck to him. It's probably not as significant to humans, but it's still a weak spot for them as well. Huh.

Tommy pulls away with an outraged screech.

"You *tricked* me!" Tommy howls.

"No," Techno says, turning to continue his patrols. "Your biology tricked you, I just used it to my advantage."

Tommy follows him around a bit more closely after that, grumbling about 'being tricked'. Techno finds it much more palatable than listening to him tell endless stories about nothing at all. Wilbur and Tubbo would be the ones to like listening to stories about life on Earth, not Techno. Why can't he tell his stories to people who actually would *enjoy* them? This kid is so annoying.

He's so annoying and Techno doesn't like him at all, even if he takes to ruffling the kid's hair when he passes him in the halls.

---

Phil is a captain. It's more than his title at this point, it makes up a huge part of his identity. He takes immense pride not just in running the ship and guiding its crew, but in managing the health and safety of his crew as well. It's an immense weight on his shoulders, especially with the change in dynamic Tommy has brought, along with Tubbo's added presence all while trying to figure out human biology to make sure Tommy is as healthy as possible. Which is terribly difficult considering the human's reluctance to share anything about himself. Sure, Phil gets it, but how is he supposed to make sure Tommy is okay when he doesn't have a baseline.

It's stressful, but he wouldn't give it up for anything.

So when his sharp hearing catches soft crying in the bowels of the ship, he is immediately on his feet, walking as quickly as he can down the long hallway, his talons clicking on the metal floors.

He tracks the noise down to a large storage closet. Phil pauses outside of the door, his hand over the knob. The crying doesn't stop, so whoever is in there probably can't hear him. Phil turns the handle and the door opens soundlessly, flooding the room with light.

Tommy sits inside, staring at him with wide, red-rimmed eyes. He swipes at his face, flushing with embarrassment.

"Hey Phil," He says, trying to sound casual and failing miserably. Phil makes a heartbroken sound low in his chest and sweeps forward, opening his arms. Tommy flinches back, and Phil hesitates, closing the door behind him and sitting down on the floor in front of the teenager.

"What's wrong?" Phil asks softly. Tommy sniffles, wiping stray tears from his face.

"Nothing. Allergies, ya' know. Tubbo's bringing in all that fuckin' pollen." Tommy says wetly, not looking at Phil.

"Tommy," Phil presses, and Tommy breaks into renewed sobs, covering his face with his hands. The human curls in on himself with the force of his wailing, and Phil shuffles forward. He can feel his hearts breaking, he's sure of it.

"Oh *Tommy*, come here." Phil coos, and Tommy leans into his arms, letting Phil hold him as he cries. "What's wrong?"

"I-I can't- I don't- *Phil* , I'm so *tired* ." Tommy wails, pressing his face into Phil's shoulder. Phil's mind races on how to comfort the human. He knows all of his other crew's little tells and how to soothe them, but he knows *nothing* about humans. No one really does, unless they got that information illegally.

Phil lets Tommy cry into his shoulder for a few more seconds before he remembers how Tubbo had settled him down during game night. Phil's talons slide into the human's hair, scratching at his scalp, careful not to nick the thin skin on the top of his head. Tommy immediately melts into the touch, sobs not stopping, but getting noticeably quieter. Phil coos at him again, a noise parent Elytrians made to their fledglings, not that Tommy knows that. If Techno or Wilbur were here they'd be teasing him relentlessly.

Phil looks down at the trembling human curled into his arms. Well, maybe they'd wait for the situation to blow over before making fun of him. Phil keeps running his claws through Tommy's tangled hair until the human's sobs slowly turn into shuddering breaths, and even then he doesn't stop. If there is any comfort he can offer to Tommy at all then he's going to give it freely.

"I miss Earth, Phil." Tommy breathes.

"I know, mate."

"I wish this didn't happen."

"I know."

"I deserved better,"

"You did."

The two of them lapse into silence. Tommy still has his face buried in the shoulder of Phil's robe, but his tears have stopped, thankfully. Tommy's breathing slowly evens out until Phil is pretty sure he's asleep. Phil's legs are starting to fall asleep where they're bent beneath him, but he doesn't have the heart to wake Tommy, so instead, he slowly lowers himself to the ground, laying the human's head on top of his stomach. Tommy remains asleep, thankfully.

Phil would laugh at the absurdness of the situation if he wasn't sure that would wake Tommy. One of the galaxy's most feared creatures is using him as a pillow. Phil runs his claws through Tommy's hair again, smiling at the way Tommy's face relaxes further.

---

If Tubbo finds them an hour later, both asleep on the floor of the storage closet, he takes a couple of blackmail photos, then that's his business.

Tommy is *so* angry at his biology. How *dare* it make it so that he can be disarmed with a simple head-scratch. It's total bullshit, and his crewmates take full advantage of this weakness whenever he gets too uppity.

The worst part is that Tommy can't even be too mad about it, because it makes that stupid warm buzzing feeling rise in his chest that chokes out all negative emotions like the world's most cheerful weed.

He hates it and he hates them and if he happens to lean into their touch when they run their fingers through his hair then it's a total coincidence and anyone who tells you otherwise is a liar and a wrongun'.

## Chapter End Notes

OK SO if you follow my tumblr you'll know that I got a FUCKTON of fanart in the past few days. like. a stupid amount.

here are the links xoxox go give them lots of love and followers

[this FUCKING HILARIOUS AND BEAUTIFUL comic by thunderbottle](#)

[another super fucking poggers drawing by thunderbottle REALLY FUCKING COOL](#)

[ALIEN BEE TUBBO UAHOG I LOVE IT SM](#)

[this AMAZING ASS sketch sheet by definii OHGSDJ THE POSES ARE SO GOOD  
AND THE ARTSTYLE IS POGGERS](#)

[AND THIS ADORABLE DRAWING HERE BY JUSTPAPS ITS SO CARTOONY  
AND FUN AND BOUNCY \(spoiler warning tho\)](#)

# Protectiveness

## Chapter Summary

hello again

CW:  
blood and injury  
mentions of kidnapping  
violence

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Being the crew manning a trading vessel, planetside trips were necessary for the Sleepy Bois, and none had been made since Tommy had snuck his way on board almost two months ago, so another trip to stock up on supplies was well overdue.

Tommy was *very* adamant that he be allowed to go planetside with the other crewmembers, much to Techno's displeasure. For *some* reason, he was against the idea of a wanted fugitive accompanying them to a populated area where he may be seen and arrested, but Tommy is getting restless, and a restless human is a dangerous one.

So Tommy goes with them, a black cowl pulled over his head to hide his face. Red cloth is pulled over his mouth and nose, and dark glasses hide his eyes. Unless you were looking for him, you'd never know he's human.

---

"It's so fuckin' hot down here," Tommy complains, pulling at the neckline of the cloak draped over him.

"You're the one who wanted to come with," Techno reminds him gruffly.

"I didn't think it would be fuckin' sweltering." Tommy snips. Techno turns, probably to start another argument, but is cut off when Tubbo barrels into Tommy, excitedly holding up two

orders of street food.

"Tommy, you *have* to come try this!" Tubbo says, holding up what looks like some sort of fried fruit on a stick. "It's *so* good."

Tommy smiles under his mask and takes the fruit. He lifts it to his mouth before frowning.

"Shit, I can't eat it with this stupid fucking disguise."

"Let me have yours then," Tubbo says with a broad smile, reaching for the fruit. Tommy holds it above his head with an offended shriek.

"No fuck off, you gave it to me so it's mine!"

"You can't even eat it!"

Phil chuckles at the two boy's antics, eyes pinching in the corners as he smiles.

"Boys," He calls, drawing both of their attention. "Why don't you two go hang out in the woods? Tommy, you can eat there." Where there are no people, goes unspoken.

Tubbo and Tommy exchange an excited look and rush off to the woods, laughing and shoving each other all the way.

"Keep each other safe! Oh, and keep your comms on you!" Phil calls after them.

"We will!" The two of them shout in tandem, voices fading as they disappear into the treeline. Phil chuckles quietly, watching the boys run off. Techno huffs irritably beside him.

"Oh shush," Phil says, flaring his wings so the tip of it smacks Techno in the shoulder.  
"Tubbo will keep Tommy out of trouble."

"Who's gonna be keeping Tubbo out of trouble?" Wilbur says, rumbling in amusement.

---

Tommy is *free* ! Well, he's been free-ish for a month now, but he's actually been given permission to *go* ! To run! His whole body buzzes with the thought that he's *outside* again! Maybe not on Earth but *fuck* ! Trees! He thought he'd never see trees again! And the fruit-thing that Tubbo brought him had been the best thing he's eaten since he got to space! Well, maybe not better than gapples, but it was certainly a close contender.

A laugh bubbles up in his chest and he doesn't even bother to choke it back down. He throws his head back and closes his eyes and *laughs*. Tubbo is smiling at him, and Tommy is smiling back, all scrunched-up eyes and blunt teeth.

Tommy turns, looking at a nearby tree appraisingly. They look a bit different from the trees on Earth, but the colors are more or less the same. The main change is that the branches are lower to the ground, but they look sturdy. Perfect.

Tommy smiles back at Tubbo, a bit more mischievously this time, and before his friend can say anything Tommy is wrapping his hands around one of the lowest branches and hauling himself up. He hears Tubbo shout in surprise below him, but he doesn't slow down. He hasn't been able to actually climb anything in *ages*, he'd forgotten how fun it was.

"Holy shit!" Tubbo shouts from the ground. Tommy looks down at him, smiling broadly.

"Yeah! Fuck you bitch, I'm... fuck me, what's the word for 'tree-dwelling' in Common?"

"Arboreal?" Tubbo suggests.

"Yeah! I'm arboreal, bitch!" Tommy says, sticking his tongue out briefly before continuing to haul ass up the tree. Tommy sticks his tongue out, focusing on the next branch. His hand wraps around it, and he's very grateful that whatever planet they're on has trees with stupidly smooth bark. Tommy may have been a bit worried about that fact, less texture means it's easier to fall, after all, but the branches are slender enough that Tommy can wrap his whole hand around them, pretty much eliminating any chance of losing his grip, given that he doesn't let go, of course.

Tommy hears buzzing behind him and instinctively ducks his head, memories of the bees of Earth startling him.

"Boo!" Tubbo shouts in his ear. Tommy flounders for a second, hand opening where it had wrapped around the branch. Aw, shit.

He hears a startled yelp from Tubbo, and huh, he'd sort of forgotten that his best friend could fly. Tommy throws his hands out, hoping to snag a branch on his way down, but he only succeeds in smacking his knuckles on the tree. It's too late to even adjust himself, he slams into the ground back-first. It immediately knocks all the wind out of him, and Tommy spends a few seconds trying to figure out if he's conscious. He must have blacked out for a few seconds at least, because Tubbo is suddenly kneeling next to him now, face screwed up in worry.

"Oh thank the stars you're alive," Tubbo breathes, collapsing on top of Tommy.

"Barely," Tommy groans. He moves to roll himself onto his side, but hisses through his teeth and collapses back down. Oh, he *definitely* fucked up his ribs.

"Mother *fucker*," Tommy hisses, taking a deep breath. If he could fill his lungs all the way then the injury isn't life-threatening, he remembers that from their mandatory health classes in year nine.

"Tommy, I am *so* sorry," Tubbo says, laying his hands over Tommy's side. "I thought you heard me coming, I didn't!"

Tommy waves him off and Tubbo falls silent.

"It's okay, I'm fine, you didn't mean it," Tommy says, clutching his side.

"You fell like twenty feet!" Tubbo says, a bit hysterically.

"I won't die of it," Tommy argues, trying to sit up. Tubbo wrestles him back down, careful to avoid his injured ribs.

"Stop- Okay, we need to go get Phil," Tubbo says. Tommy groans.

"No, come on. He's gonna fuss, I'm fine, let's just go...find a good spot to lie down." Tommy argues, though he knows there's no point in the matter. Tubbo's got that look in his eye that tells Tommy that he's getting what he wants.

They don't have a chance to argue further, because they hear laughter from a nearby tree. Tommy is immediately up, broken ribs be damned, moving in between Tubbo and the voice. Tommy's hand shoots up to make sure his mask and glasses are still in place. They are.

"Now *that* is some entertainment," The voice drawls in Common. Tommy widens his stance slightly, making sure Tubbo is hidden behind him. The person steps out from behind the tree, and the first thing Tommy notices is that they are a *creepy* looking motherfucker. Too many eyes that all seem to blink independently of one another, each shining with a hunger that makes Tommy's blood run cold.

"The hell do you want, bitch." Tommy growls, lowering himself slightly. The alien laughs, throwing up their hands. Tommy realizes with a start that they have eyes on the palm of their hands too. Gross.

"Settle down, friend, I'm allowed to be in these woods as much as anyone else!" Tommy does not settle down.

"I'm not your *friend*, leave us alone." Tommy barks. The stranger's smile grows a little.

"How are those ribs? Pretty nasty fall, woulda' killed most folk. You must be the hardy type." The stranger says, eyes glinting. Tommy freezes, but only for a moment.

"Fuck off!" Tommy growls.

"Oh calm down, I'm not looking for a work mule," The stranger says disdainfully. Tommy snarls at the comparison. "I was thinking of picking up something... a little easier to handle while on-planet."

The stranger darts forward, creepy eye-covered hands outstretched. Tommy flinches backward, but the stranger isn't reaching for him.

He's reaching for Tubbo.

"Fuck no," Tommy roars, grabbing the stranger's arm and twisting it. The stranger shrieks thinly, writhing away. Tommy only lets go when they swat at his injured ribs, making him yelp in pain. The stranger jumps backward, a staggering distance, probably thanks to their long, double-jointed legs. The stranger snarls at them, clutching at their arm.

"You brat," He says before his face is settled into businesslike neutrality. Tommy bristles further, he's never liked businessmen, on Earth or in space, and this man is no different. "Let me tell you what," The stranger says, and Tommy's jaw clenches. Everything about this person is *wrong*, the knowledge climbs up his spine like a colony of ants.

"Why don't you let me walk with your little buddy there, and I give you half of what I make." The stranger says, steepling his fingers. Tommy moves so he is further blocking Tubbo.

"Let me repeat myself," Tommy growls. If this stranger could see his eyes, they would know of the darkness that crowds behind them. "Fuck. No."

"We can be civilized about this," The many-eyed stranger says, slinking forward. Tommy takes a step back, pushing Tubbo behind him further. "Listen, apisaids tend to stick to their own kind, whatever he's offered you to guard him for I'll pay double."

"Motherfucker-" Tommy swears in English before catching himself. The stranger doesn't seem to recognize the language, so Tommy continues, more careful to keep his words in the

strange, low lilt of Common. "He's not paying me shit, I'm here because I wanna be, now get lost before things get ugly."

"You could have made some pocket coin, kid." The stranger sighs. "He's coming with me either way. There are some ah...less than legal farms that need his kind working the plants. They've got a bit of a green thumb, you know."

The false casual conversation is cut when the stranger dives for Tommy, clearly trying to take him out before trying to capture Tubbo, as Tommy was the one who was injured. Tommy bites back a scream as he is tackled to the ground, the stranger's knee comes down on his already broken ribs and he can't hold back his yelp of pain. Tubbo screams too, more of fear than of pain, and Tommy turns to look at him, hoping to *God* there isn't blood on his teeth. The last thing he needs is for Tubbo to be scared any further.

"Go!" Tommy spits. Tubbo shakes his head, eyes wide with terror. "Go, *now!*" Tommy insists. "You don't have to leave but- *up!* Go up!"

Tubbo looks conflicted for only a moment before Tommy shouts again and then shoots upward. The stranger's multitudinous gaze follows Tubbo up, and then focuses back on Tommy.

"Well that's annoying," He says conversationally. "But hardly a concern. Once you're unconscious it'll be pretty easy to bargain your life for his."

"You're really fucking stupid," Tommy hisses. The stranger digs his knee into Tommy's injured side further, making Tommy gasp.

"Now that you're down for the count, I think it's my turn to ask the questions." The stranger says easily, as if he's not threatening Tommy's life. "If you're not hired help, why the fuck are you hiding your face like that?"

Tommy almost laughs. He probably would have had there not been a knee in his stomach. This idiot is setting up the perfect dramatic reveal.

"Why don't you take the mask off and find out." Tommy spits. The stranger huffs out a laugh. Tommy just needs to keep him talking until his breath is back, and then.

"And risk getting bit. No way, I don't know what you are, or if you're some venomous freak. It's not like it matters, I've got the upper hand so-"

His grip weakens, and Tommy moves. Tommy shoves his arms free, breaking out of the stranger's grip. His hands wrap around the stranger's biceps and squeeze and fiercely as he can. He digs his nails in, pleased that they are sharp enough to draw blood. The stranger lets out a choked noise, struggling a bit, but Tommy doesn't let go, he only digs his nails in harder until the weight of the knee on his side lightens. The moment it does Tommy flips the stranger so that he is pinning him instead. The stranger jabs his ribs, but Tommy doesn't even flinch. He can't feel it anymore, the adrenaline has taken over. The only thing in his brain is 'protect Tubbo' on loop.

Tommy lifts the stranger and slams them back into the ground again.

"You really are a stupid bitch," Tommy growls. The stranger's eyes are wide, all fuckton of them. "Why would you attack a random person. You don't know what I am."

"No," The stranger says, face darkening. "But I know I can win. You got the upper hand on me for a second, and maybe that's on me for underestimating you, but you're not going to win this fight. There was a reason I was sent planetside." The stranger lifts an arm, fingers outstretched. Somewhere above his head Tubbo shouts in alarm. The stranger rakes their claws across his face, drawing four shallow red lines. Tommy flinches back, screwing his eyes shut. The glasses had protected them, thankfully, but the swipe from the stranger knocked them to the side. They lay on the packed dirt. Tommy looks at his reflection in the black glass. His blonde hair is dirt speckled, blood runs down his face and onto his mask, and his eyes are showing. Blue, pissed, and unmistakably human.

"How-" The stranger struggles under Tommy's hands. "My claws- you should be unconscious at *least* by now!" Tommy turns his gaze onto the stranger, glasses forgotten. He feels where the blood runs down his face and he longs to wipe it away, but he can't risk letting the stranger get up.

The stranger stops struggling. Their anger and confusion drops into terror. Usually, Tommy hates being feared with all of his being, but this person just tried to take Tubbo. He *should* be afraid.

"You- you're-" The stranger stammers. Tommy pulls his mask down to rest underneath his jaw. There's no point in hiding his identity now, and he'd rather not waterboard himself with his own blood.

"I am not hired help," Tommy hisses, leaning in close to the stranger, heedless of his claws. He's pretty confident that he can handle anything this alien throws at him. "I am Tommy Innit, human being, and the best friend of the person *you* just tried to kidnap."

The stranger pales further, if that's even possible.

"You- he- you're- you're his *pack* ?" The stranger breathes. Tommy snorts in amusement.

"He's *family* , " Tommy corrects. His head is too spinny to remember the word for family in common, but English gets the point across just fine in his opinion.

"No," The stranger whimpers.

"Yes," Tommy says. He looks up to Tubbo. "Hey, I have this handled. Go get Phil."

Tubbo hesitates, but must see the grim determination on Tommy's bloodied face, because he goes with no arguments. Tommy watches Tubbo leave, flitting in between the trees. Once Tubbo is out of Tommy's field of vision, he turns his attention back towards the stranger. Drops of scarlet blood drip onto the stranger's pale face. The contrast is kind of beautiful, in a morbid sort of way.

"What are you going to do to me?" The stranger hisses.

"I'm still thinking about that," Tommy hums. "I *want* to kill you, but I also don't want Tubbo to think I'm a monster if he comes back to a clearing full of blood and guts." The stranger gulps. Tommy's bluffing, of course. He's a lot of things, but he's not going to murder someone who's already pinned. That's low.

"But the thing is," Tommy continues. "People like you are the kind of people I hate the most. People who are willing to hurt people irreparably just to make a quick buck. That's *evil* ."

Tommy leans in. The stranger can't lean back, not with the way his head is pressed against the dirt.

"I want to make sure you never, ever do this again."

Tommy has always been a biter. Even as a little kid, they wrote it on his information sheet. It got a little better after he got braces, but once they were off, he was right back to old habits.

Well, you know what they say about old habits. They die hard.

Tommy lunges forward and snaps his teeth down on the stranger's shoulder, closing his jaw until he tastes blood and the stranger is howling in pain. He does his best to lock his jaw even as the stranger struggles. He shakes his head a little, just to get back at the way the stranger scratched his face.

He leans back, spitting out a mouthful of pinkish blood. He wipes his mouth.

"Fucking gross," He says, scowling.

"You fucking bit me!" The stranger screams hysterically.

"Yeah well, you scratched me. Looks like we're both wild animals." Tommy retorts, crossing his arms. He's not too worried about the stranger getting away at this point, not with the way he's frantically pressing his hand to his new wound.

"Oh, my *stars* , " The stranger wails. "Am I gonna turn into a human now?"

"We're not zombies, dick." Tommy snarks. " *God*, when is Phil coming back."

Turns out, he didn't have to wait long at all, because seconds later the sounds of thundering footsteps approach the clearing. Tommy tenses, ready to dart off into the woods should the space cops appear, guns blazing.

There was no need to worry, because moments later the three out of the four other crewmembers of the Sleepy Boi's Inc crash into the clearing, covered in leaves and sticks that spoke of how quickly they had come through the forest.

"Tommy!" Tubbo shouts, stepping forward before being held back by Wilbur, who's eyeing Tommy's face with terror. Techno steps forward, holding out the space-equivalent of handcuffs out in front of him.

"You are under arrest for-" Techno begins in his monotone drawl before being cut off by the still wailing alien.

"I don't care, I don't care! There's a *human* , aren't there more important things to worry about?"

"No, there's no human here," Techno says gruffly. "You're probably just going crazy. Hold out your arms."

The alien complies, and when Tommy makes eye contact with Techno he mouths 'where's Phil?'. Techno's eyes dart up at the sky for a brief moment, and Tommy's gaze follows. Sure enough, there is a black smudge flying in circles against the pale orange sky, wings flapping occasionally to keep airborne. Tommy relaxes at the idea that his captain is nearby.

Techno pulls the stranger out from under Tommy, shooting him an amused look at the sluggishly bleeding bite mark on his shoulder. Techno guides the kidnapper away, probably to the local police, Tubbo following after a brief, worried glance at Tommy. Not like they can get him arrested without witness testimony, right?

Phil swoops down as soon as the kidnapper is out of sight, landing next to Tommy, sending a spray of soil up when he lands. Phil immediately pulls Tommy into a hug, wrapping his wings around him. His talons find their way into his hair and Tommy melts into the hug.

"Phil..." Wilbur says, sounding worried. Why does he sound worried? "I think maybe we should check his wounds."

"What- Oh my stars," Phil says, rattling his feathers.

"It's not that bad," Tommy says, voice slurring slightly. He brings a hand to his face, but it's batted away.

"No, don't touch it." Wilbur scolds.

"What's happening, he was fine a second ago!" Phil says worriedly, feathers fluffing as he tries to inspect Tommy's wounds. Tommy wishes he would just let him lie down.

"Oh *shit* . Phil, do you remember what Tubbo told us about adrenaline crashes?" Wilbur says, sounding horrified. Phil hisses.

"We need to get him back to the ship. Now." Phil says, wrapping an arm around Tommy's back. It feels nice.

"We can't go back through town! He can't wear a mask with all that blood, it'll suffocate him."

Phil makes a frustrated noise, it's sorta human but more chirpy. It sounds cool. Tommy's vision is starting to do a weird thing where the edges are turning black, like the vignettes on old pictures. It would be cool if Tommy wasn't feeling like absolute dogshit.

"-are you sure you can do that?" Wilbur asks, and- oh, he should probably be listening to this, huh?

"I don't have much of a choice, mate," Phil says. He sounds determined. A scaled arm snakes under the bend in his legs and hoists him up. The other arm is under his shoulders. Feathers tickle his nose, so it must be Phil carrying him. He's sure Phil looks a little silly, what with how much taller Tommy is than Phil, but really, that only makes it more impressive.

Then, there is wind whipping all around him, tousling his hair. Tommy opens his eyes again, though he doesn't remember closing them. He sees the tops of the trees.

"This is so cool," He tells Phil. His captain gives him a tight smile. "Hey, Phil." Tommy continues.

"Yeah?"

"I fell out of a tree,"

" *What ?!*"

Phil keeps trying to talk to him, but his words are being eaten up by the buzzing in Tommy's ears. The wind tears away all his thoughts before they can even enter his head. He's trying really hard not to fall asleep. He feels like it would definitely be rude to fall asleep while someone is flying him around. That would be like falling asleep while being carried by Spider-Man. Mary Jane would have been kicked to the curb if she had done this.

He is so not falling asleep.

When Tommy wakes up, his entire body hurts like hell.

He immediately tries to roll over onto his side, but is shoved back down by several pairs of hands and panicked voices.

"Tommy! Are you awake?" A voice asks, they sound scared. And familiar. Tommy feels like he should respond to this voice. Ah, Tubbo.

*Shit ,* Tubbo.

Tommy snaps awake, trying to sit up and being held down by Techno. Tommy flails his arms and glares at the piglin, but it holds no real heat. He's far too tired to actually try to get up.

"Will you just stay down, gremlin." Techno grumbles. "You're never gonna heal at this rate."

"Is Tubbo okay?" Tommy asks, words slurred, completely ignoring Techno. Tubbo's head pops up from behind Techno, and Tommy's entire body relaxes.

"Sick, what's the damage on me?"

Wilbur bristles a bit.

"Your *damage* is three broken ribs, two on your left and one on your right, a concussion, a fractured left hand, four lacerations on your face, which were *poisoned* by the way, and a stupid amount of bruises." Wilbur gives him a deadpan look. "What the fuck happened?"

"Tubbo pushed me out of a tree," Tommy says, using his best tattling voice. Tommy laughs when Tubbo stutters out denials, but immediately curls into himself with a gasp of pain at the strain to his ribs. Wilbur is at his side in an instant, supporting him so he doesn't have to lean forward.

"Thanks," Tommy mutters. Wilbur says something that might have been 'no problem', but it was said too quietly to tell.

"You fallin' back asleep, mate?" Phil asks, voice hushed. Tommy hums a confirmation. "Okay, you rest. You were really brave today, even if it *was* pretty stupid."

---

When Tommy wakes up next, he doesn't hurt nearly as bad, but he also kind of feels like he's floating, so he must be on painkillers. Tommy jolts and checks his arms for IVs, but there's no needles stuck into his arms. No marks either. Tommy breathes a sigh of relief.

"I told them to give you the pain killers orally," Says a voice. Tommy nearly screams, but manages to snap his mouth shut before waking everyone on the ship.

"Tubbo," Tommy sighs. "Why are you reading in the dark?"

Tubbo closes his book with a wry smile.

"I see better in the dark than humans, and I hear light wakes you up. You need the rest."

"Thanks," Tommy says. "For the pain-killer thing, I mean. Not the lights. I probably would have stayed asleep."

"No problem," Tubbo says, sitting on the end of his cot. "I have a question." Tommy looks at him a bit warily.

"If you're gonna chew me out for getting hurt can you wait until I'm better?" Tommy groans. Tubbo chuckles lightly.

"No, I would, but... Tommy, did you mean what you said back there?"

"I said a lot of things-"

"You said I'm your family." Tubbo clarifies, and Tommy's throat goes dry.

"You don't have to be if you don't-"

"Tommy," Tubbo interrupts gently. "Apisalids don't... have *families*, but we have clusters. I think it's pretty similar. You're my cluster, okay?"

Tommy feels tears roll down his cheeks, and all of a sudden Tubbo looks terrified.

"Oh- Tommy I'm sorry- what hurts, I'll get Phil-"

Tommy grabs Tubbo's sleeve before he rushes to go get Phil, wiping his face with his free hand.

"Tubbo, you're my family, okay. I'm going to protect you." Tommy promises.

"I'm going to protect you too," Tubbo says. "You might not think you need it, being a big scary human, but I'm going to protect you."

"We protect each other, huh?" Tommy says, a small smile playing at the corners of his mouth.

"Yeah, that sounds good."

Tubbo slots himself next to Tommy, not minding the smaller cot. Tommy stares at the ceiling, still feeling a bit floaty from the drugs, but endlessly grateful that they hadn't been given to him intravenously. Saying that Tommy hates needles would be the understatement of the century.

Tubbo is asleep, snoring into his pillow. Tommy stares at him for a moment, feeling the sting of the cuts on his face. He feels the sureness that he would do it a million times if it meant Tubbo would be safe.

*Huh* . So this is family.

#### Chapter End Notes

thanks 4 reading! leave a comment, it's a great way to get more writing faster!

# Dancing

## Chapter Summary

hello again

no content warnings for this chapter

i know songs in fics can be cringy, so i tried to do it right and pick a song that fits with the story and also kicks major ass

here's the link if you wanna listen when you read, or if you haven't heard the song b4. i deffo recommend listening not just for this chapter but because the song fucking rules.  
[here you go :\]](#)

also its kind of a short chapter but that's bc I'm really excited for chapter 6 :]

Tommy had no idea you could be this bored while traveling at incomprehensible speeds on a space pirate ship through an endless void of nothingness.

But alas, he's bored out of his fucking *mind*.

He's been on bed rest for *four whole days*, and no matter how many times Wilbur makes surprised comments about how quickly he's been healing, he's still forced to remain on bed rest 'just to see'. His ribs are *fine*! Okay, *maybe* they still twinge with pain when he breathes too deeply, but honestly, it could have been a hell of a lot worse. Tommy refuses to tell any of them how close his ribs came to puncturing his lungs, he can't *imagine* how much they'd fret over him.

Still, though, he's bored. His muscles are practically *atrophying* at this rate! Well, that may be an exaggeration, but if he stays in this stupid cot much longer he might try to convince Phil that his muscles really *are* decaying.

He tries not to think about how the setting makes him feel. What it makes him remember. He's not the biggest fan of medical situations on a good day, so being laid up in one and not allowed to leave isn't exactly a walk in the park for his mental state. Not that he's gonna tell

any of his crewmates that. He doesn't need them thinking he's unstable and locking him up again.

So he's taking a nap, as he has been doing quite often recently, just as a way to pass the time. Truthfully, he'd woken up a while ago, and had just been lying with his eyes shut, listening to the buzzing ambiance of space that lay beyond their thin metal walls.

He is pulled sharply out of his daily few hours of letting his mind wander when Tubbo bursts into the room. Tommy shoots up into a sitting position, wincing at the jolt in his ribs. His gaze snaps to Tubbo, searching his face for any sign of terror. There is nothing there but excitement, so Tommy flops back down onto his cot with a groan.

"What do you wannnntttt," Tommy sighs, doing his best to ignore Tubbo as he tugs his arm, trying to get him up.

"You have to come see this!" Tubbo says, bouncing on his heels. "You're not gonna believe-"

"Hey, hey! I'm on bedrest, Wilbur's orders." Tommy says smugly, rolling over onto his less-injured side and pretending to fall back asleep.

"*Tommy* , " Tubbo breathes, and the genuine happiness in his voice makes Tommy pause.  
"We intercepted a radio signal. From *Earth* ."

---

Tommy is running, and he really shouldn't be. Not with his barely healed ribs still sore where they are bound by his clothes, nor with the still fading scratches crossing down his face. But he's running, because how could he not when he's been promised something he's wanted so much it's hurt for the past- he doesn't even *know* how long it's been.

*Music* ! Well, news too, but he honestly couldn't care less about whatever stupid political drama or tax cuts are happening on Earth, not when there's *music* ! The stuff he remembers! As much as he loves when Wilbur plays music from his home planet, it isn't familiar to him. It doesn't tug at his heartstrings the way music from Earth does. When he sang to himself in that cage, and later in the cell, it helped. It didn't fix things, but it helped.

He hears speaking, English speaking, not the Common he had grown so used to, and he runs even faster. He bursts into the room to hear two radio show hosts laughing at some stupid

story, but he doesn't care.

"Tommy! Did you run-" Phil starts, standing up, no doubt to berate Tommy, but the speaking on the radio stops and is replaced by the plucking of a guitar, and Tommy *recognizes* it.

He falls to his knees with a wounded sound, making the other aliens in the room pause. He wants to cry, but not in the same way he's been crying since he was taken. He... he feels good. It's grief, yeah, but hope too. Weird.

"Do you... know this song?" Techno asks, sounding a bit uncomfortable with Tommy's blatant emotional display. Hell, Tommy would be uncomfortable if he wasn't so wrapped up in the longing and grief and *love* this song sings out with every note.

The guitar pauses for less than a second, and then the lyrics start.

*'Chiquitita, tell me what's wrong,'* The radio sings, staticy and distorted, but unmistakable all the same. Tommy laughs, but it sounds like a sob. *'You're enchain'd by your own sorrow.'* Tommy lifts his voice to sing with it.

*"In your eyes, there's no hope for tomorrow."*

Tommy stands up, eyes bright, mouthing the words as they play. He holds out a hand to whoever's closest. That person happens to be Phil.

"Dance with me!" He cries over the music. Phil blinks a couple of times, hesitating.

"Am I allowed- I thought dancing was special-" Phil starts. Tommy rolls his eyes and grabs his captain's hand, gentler than he would another human, pulling him towards himself.

Tommy doesn't really know how to dance, but he moves anyway, tugging Phil to follow in his motions, spinning and rolling his shoulders.

*"-You were always so sure of yourself,"* Tommy sings, loud and a little off-key, but he doesn't mind at all, not with the joy that's swelling in his chest. *"Now I see you've broken a feather,"* He winks teasingly at Phil. *"I hope we can patch it up together!"*

He doesn't think the aliens can understand English very well when he's singing, but it doesn't matter. They don't need to know the words. They can hear the music perfectly fine. Tommy hears the rising notes of the piano and throws his arms out, turning his face upwards and scrunching his eyes as much as he can.

*"Chiquitita you and I knowwww!"* Tommy belts with a wet laugh, ignoring the ache in his ribs. *"How the heartaches come and they go and the scars they're leaving!"*

Phil has retreated now, and Tommy reaches out a hand to grab another one of his crew members, eager to dance with any one of them. To share the joy that's settling inside of him. Tommy laughs, missing a few lines of the song, smiling encouragingly at Wil, who takes his hand with a hesitant smile.

"I'd better not be infringing on some weird, human social ritual," Wilbur says, smiling. Tommy snorts, grabbing both of Wilbur's wrists.

"You're not," He reassures, tugging Wilbur into a lopsided sort of waltz. It's probably barely recognizable as a waltz. He had tried to learn during gym one year, but the lessons never stuck. He had ended up winging it every single time. Still, though, it does what it needs to do, which is channel the energy that is building within him, brought about by music that he hasn't heard in far too long.

*"Chiquitita, you and I cry,"* Tommy sings again, a bit quieter now, dancing clumsily with Wilbur, who wears a matching smile, if not a bit confused. *"But the sun is still in the sky and shining above you!"* Tommy belts, letting go of Wilbur's wrists to throw his arms upward. *"Let me hear you sing once more, like you did before! Sing a new song, Chiquitita!"*

Wilbur is humming along to the music, dancing a bit hesitantly, shuffling back and forth. He looks a bit like a middle schooler at their first school dance. The thought makes Tommy laugh, throwing his head back. Tubbo approaches, looking a bit out of place, and Tommy grabs his wrists too, raising one of the apisaids arms up above his head and spinning him. Tubbo laughs, a bit surprised, but falls into the rhythm pretty easily.

The song slows a bit, and Tommy takes a second to breathe, swaying in place with his best friend.

"I didn't know humans dance," Tubbo says with an excited smile. Tommy smiles too. He's been smiling since the song started, his cheeks are starting to hurt.

"It's... I'm pretty sure it's the oldest form of language." Tommy says a bit breathlessly. "Do apisaids dance?"

"Yeah," Tubbo says. "It started as a communication thing, but now it's more recreational."

"Pretty similar to humans, then." Tommy hums. "Dancing started as a way to tell stories, and now it's for fun. There are some like, ritual dances you can do, though."

"Like what?"

"People dance at weddings," Tommy says. Tubbo makes a confused noise, and it occurs to Tommy that Tubbo probably doesn't know what a wedding is.

"A wedding is like... a ceremony where you promise to stick together forever. If you're religious people consider it a binding of your souls."

"That's awesome, we should get married," Tubbo says. Tommy barks out a laugh.

"It's a bit more complicated than that," Tommy says with a smile. Tubbo sighs deeply.

"Wow. My own best friend doesn't want to marry me, I see how it is." Tubbo says, voice full of false misery. Tommy laughs and spins Tubbo again, opening his mouth to sing along to the song once more.

*"-you'll be dancing once again, and the pain will end, you'll have no time for grieving."* He joins, feeling a little jolt of pride at how nice his harmonies sound with the music. He's still got it, even with the months without any real practice. He throws one arm out dramatically, the other holding onto Tubbo. The apisaid follows his lead, mirroring Tommy and throwing out his free arm as well.

*"Chiquitita, you and I cryyyyyy,"* Tommy belts, note wobbling a bit with the laughter caught in his chest. *"But the sun is still in the sky and shining above you!"* Tommy takes a heaving breath, and Tubbo lets go, taking a few steps back before shoving Technoblade into Tommy's space. Tommy beams, reaching out for the piglin's hand. Techno looks hesitant, as the others had before him, but grabs Tommy's hand anyway. Tommy would be surprised if piglins had any form of dancing other than war-ritual dancing, but he's sure Techno can learn. And if not, it'll be really funny to watch him try.

*'Let me hear you sing once more, like you did before,'* The radio plays. Tommy doesn't sing along now, instead smiling encouragingly at Technoblade. The piglin huffs in irritation, but allows himself to be tugged forward.

"Sing a new song, Chiquitita," Tommy sings along, a bit more softly, starting a swing dance that only sort of fits with the music, but Tommy doesn't care. He kicks his feet out, hopping a little and spinning in place. He waves a hand, gesturing for Techno to join him. As expected, watching Techno try to swing dance is absolutely hilarious.

Tommy lets the music play. The song is just about over now anyway, so he just watches his crewmates dance around him, all at varying levels of awkwardness. The lyrics end and the music starts to fade before crescendoing again. Tommy's breath catches in his throat and he throws his arms out, basking in the familiar song.

The piano gets faster and faster, and Tommy can't stop himself from spinning, throwing his arms into the air and tilting his head back. He doesn't even know what he's doing, just that he's *moving*. The song fades out, and Tommy is left panting, tears running down his face. He hadn't even realized he'd been crying. Tubbo steps forward, concerned, but Tommy just smiles.

The radio show hosts are back, talking about the song, but Tommy doesn't listen, he's just waiting for the next song to play. He's watching these people that he's been staying with for more than two months now laugh and talk and sing and he... he feels like he's home.

He knows it like he knows how to dance. Never any structure, but always there, within him. Something that makes him feel better than he had in ages, something... real.

He loves them.

Oh *shit*.

# Love

## Chapter Summary

very sweet one here. no warnings.

sorry this took so long, it's way longer than the other chapters so it took a lot longer to write, naturally.

also every time love is mentioned it's purely familial. this isn't a shipping fic

SO here it is! Love! The one universal constant!

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tommy is... well, Tommy is spiraling, for lack of a better word. His realization that he loves his crewmates had nearly sent him into a panic the moment the thought came into his head. He only staved it off by forcing the thought out of his mind the second it appeared, turning his attention back to the dancing and laughter. Something he understood, something that wouldn't come back to bite him in the ass.

Now, there is no music, no laughter, and no dancing. It's only him sitting on the bathroom counter, hands clasped over his mouth. He had excused himself to the bathroom and has been sitting here for a good twenty minutes. He hopes it isn't *too* suspicious, but he can always make something up about some weird human grooming ritual that he had to partake in. Tommy takes a shaky breath, swinging his legs down and returning his feet to the floor.

"Alright, this is fine," Tommy mutters, pacing in the small room. "So what? Love is natural! Love is *good*, this is a *good thing*! It means you're healing." Tommy says, but it's hard to convince himself.

The last person he had loved-

No. Nope. Absolutely not going down that mental rabbit hole, not unless he wants to end up a sweating, shaking mess on the bathroom floor with his entire family- his entire *crew* banging

down the door to check on him.

He picks at his nailbeds anxiously. He can't just let this lie, as much as he wishes he could, letting love lay dormant only makes it rot inside of you. He can't just *say* it, though!

Because saying it means opening himself up to rejection, saying it means admitting that he needs more than just himself, saying it means- it means-

It means he's not alone anymore.

He's been alone for so long, even before the abduction, he doesn't think he knows *how* to be part of a family.

And that, of course, is operating under the assumption that the others want him to be part of his family at all. They're *perfect*, in the weirdest of ways. All mismatched but complimenting each other perfectly, like destiny took a look at all these outcasts across the vast expanse of space and plucked them up and set them down right next to each other. They're all their best selves, so clearly full of potential that's been drawn out by the people around them.

And Tommy doesn't *fit*.

He wants to *so* bad. He really does, but at the end of the day, he's always going to be considered a monster out here. Sure, the others may not lock him up anymore, but... he can't just *pretend* that everything is normal. That he could ever be part of this crew- fuck it, part of this *family* without screwing everything up for everyone else.

He wants to run, but where would he go? The airlock? He's not ready to die, despite everything. There's no way he would risk any of the crewmembers safety in an attempt to drive the ship. He's trapped like he's always been, only this time he did it to himself.

He doesn't know what to do. He can't tell them he loves them and he can't keep it to himself either. He can't stay and he can't go. He's a scrawny teenage boy and a terrifying monster. A

walking contradiction.

There's a knock on the bathroom door and Tommy just about jumps out of his skin.

"Tommy?" It's Tubbo, of course it is. "Are you okay in there?"

"Uh- yup!" Tommy says, a bit too frantically, splashing water on his face. "Just washing my face, gimme a sec!"

"Okay," Tubbo says through the door. Tommy throws it open, hoping the water clinging to his eyelashes in fat drops will hide his red eyes.

"Hey big man," Tommy says, smiling broadly. Tubbo laughs.

"Come get dinner," He says, darting off down the hall before Tommy can respond.

"Hey!" Tommy barks after him, taking off in a sprint towards the mess hall. "That's cheating!" Tubbo spins around in midair, flying backward. Tommy whistles, impressed.

"All's fair in love and war," Tubbo says grandly, before turning back around again so he doesn't slam into a wall.

"Have you been reading Techno's dusty old English novels again?" Tommy scoffs. The slightly sheepish look crossing Tubbo's face tells him everything he needs to know.

"I'm gonna tell Technoblade," Tommy sings as he slows down to a trot, entering the mess hall. He's won this time, and he sticks out his tongue in Tubbo's direction.

"Tell me what?" Says a gruff voice from behind him, making Tommy squeak in surprise. Tommy whips around, shooting Tubbo a glare for giggling at him.

"Oh nothing my dear pig-man," Tommy drawls.

"Piglin," Techno corrects.

"That's what I said. *Anyway*, I was just listening to how our dear friend Tubbo here has been—" Tommy is cut off when a hand slaps over his mouth. Tommy shrieks, outraged at being silenced, he opens his mouth to stick his tongue out, but Tubbo yanks his hand away.

"Wait, actually don't lick me, your spit is kind of corrosive," Tubbo says, wiping his hand on his coat. Tommy winces guilty.

"Sorry," Tommy says, uncharacteristically genuinely. The heaviness that had fallen over his heart in the bathroom returns tenfold, the guilt of almost injuring his friend rushing through him.

"It's fine," Tubbo says, attention already somewhere else. "What did Phil do for dinner?"

Techno opens his mouth to answer, but Tommy doesn't pay attention to that, instead watching the two of them talk. Wilbur walks into the room and lights up at the sight of them, walking over and joining in on the conversation.

Tommy can feel the heaviness settling into his bones, but is startled out of his brooding when a bowl is set down in front of him.

"Dinner!" Phil announces proudly. Tommy looks down at the bowl in front of him and blinks. It actually looks... pretty good. Some sort of soup concoction.

"Thanks Phil, this looks great," Tommy says with a smile, already eating. Phil's eyes scrunch up at the praise, which Tommy now knows means happiness for elytrians.

"No problem, I'm happy to cook for you all," Phil says, sitting down and pulling his own bowl towards him. "It's how I show my love, after all."

The other four continue eating, but Tommy sits frozen solid, a metaphorical lightbulb going off over his head.

*That's it!* How they show their love!

If he just shows affection through benign gestures, they'll probably write it off as some weird human thing, and boom! Tommy can freely express his feelings *and* avoid the sting of rejection that would come if Tommy more openly explained that he considers the crew his family.

Tommy eats his soup in record time, getting a couple of confused stares from the crew, and then excuses himself to his room to plan, pulling sheets of paper over his desk and sitting down to write down everything he knows about the crew.

This is gonna work. It has to.

---

The first person that will be the target of his grand plan is Technoblade. He's the least emotionally driven, so there will probably be the least fallout if it all goes to shit. Unless Technoblade gets so upset that he decides to kill Tommy, but even he knows that's a little far-fetched. He had considered telling Tubbo first, but honestly, that's the part he's most scared of. He's easily the closest to Tubbo, and his disgust would sting the worst out of any of them, no contest.

Maybe Tommy's being a little ridiculous considering Tubbo had already admitted to viewing Tommy as family, but he doesn't really know how apisaid familial dynamics work, and family doesn't necessarily mean *love* like it does for Tommy.

So, Technoblade.

He had done a little research by digging through Techno's things and found a cultural guide in a drawer somewhere, beat up and dust-covered. He figured Techno wouldn't miss it and squirreled it away to his room.

It had information on all sorts of different species, though it was, unfortunately, all written in Common, which Tommy can barely read, so by the time he had managed to find each of his crewmate's species and painstakingly transfer all the information into English, it was the middle of the night.

Tommy had lost track of the passing hours, too wrapped up in his work, and hadn't even realized how much time had passed until Tubbo knocked on his door. Tommy swore loudly at the sound, scrambling to hide the book and papers before shouting for Tubbo to come in.

The apisaid opens the door, antennae flicked back in concern.

"Tommy?" Tubbo asks. "Are you sleeping in here tonight?"

"Uh," Tommy considers it, but he wouldn't sleep if he tried, not if he stayed here, too distracted by the work he had thrown himself into. "Nah, just was translating some stuff into English, I'll sleep in your room."

"Oh, can I see?" Tubbo asks, leaning forward.

"No!" Tommy yelps, throwing his arm over his papers to block them from vision. Tubbo blinks in surprise at the odd reaction, and Tommy flushes in embarrassment.

"Sorry, just- just a diary." Tommy lies, looking away. Tubbo relaxes with a small laugh.

"And you say Wilbur is dramatic," Tubbo teases. Tommy scoffs, standing from his desk heading towards the door.

"He *is*, he's a total theater kid."

"If I knew what that meant I'd pass the message on for you."

---

When Tommy wakes up Tubbo is already gone, probably getting a headstart on the day, which at least tells Tommy that he hadn't been sleepwalking, which is always a relief. Tommy stretches and yawns, not too concerned about how many of his teeth are shown by the action, not with no one around to scare with them.

He settles further against his pillow, staring at the ceiling as he blearily thinks about what he needs to get done during the day. He jolts into a sitting position as his plan comes back full-force.

"Ah, shit," Tommy groans, throwing his blankets off of himself and scrambling to head back to his room, praying that none of the others decided that today was the day they were going to invade his privacy and dig through the contents of his desk.

He rushes down the hall in socked feet, only slipping a few times, though he always manages to catch himself on the walls. He throws the door to his room open, sighing in relief to see that everything is the same as he left it last night. He didn't really think any of the others would have a reason to look through his room, but it's a relief that they didn't, especially not with his plan written in plain sight. Even if they can't read English Tommy wouldn't be too surprised if they picked up context clues.

Tommy sits back down at his desk, picking up his pen and resuming where he left off the night before.

"Right," He mutters. "Piglins are known for their affinity for protection. Crew wide meals are recommended for crews housing a piglin, as they bond through meals."

---

Tommy scans the page a few more times, checking for any mistranslations. He can't afford to mess this up. There are none that he can see, so he sets down the paper and tucks it under his mattress. He takes a deep breath and sets out for the main body of the ship to prepare.

It isn't hard to find Techno alone, not with the piglin's reclusive tendencies. Tommy wonders if that's a piglin thing or just a Technoblade thing. He isn't going to ask, his palms are already sweating with nerves, the last thing he needs is to ask potentially insensitive questions.

Tommy has been standing in the hallway outside of the room Technoblade is sitting in for a good five minutes, staring down at his feet and taking deep breaths. The bag in his hands may as well weigh a thousand pounds for all the space it's taking up in Tommy's mind.

"This was a stupid idea," Tommy mutters to himself, bringing a hand up to cover his eyes. He sinks down to the floor, back against the wall, and tries to hold back frustrated tears. Why is he even doing this? Why does he have to be so selfish as to try to intrude on a perfectly happy family? He should just be grateful he wasn't shot out of the airlock or turned in to the space cops.

Tommy moves to get to his feet, to go back to his room and write this whole plan off as a failure, but he doesn't get the chance before the door swings open, knocking him to the floor. Technoblade makes a surprised noise, but Tommy is too shocked to do anything about it other than blink up at the piglin.

"Heyyyyy," Tommy drawls with a forced smile. "Funny seeing you here."

"Why are you loitering outside of my office?" Technoblade asks gruffly, though he offers a hooved hand to help Tommy up. Tommy takes it and hoists himself to his feet.

"This is your office? Why don't I have an office?" Tommy asks. Techno snuffles, which Tommy chooses to believe is in amusement.

"Get promoted to head of security and then you can have an office," Technoblade says before walking down the hall. Tommy is quick to follow, bag still held tightly in his hand.

"How are you the head of security if there's only one security guard?" Tommy teases. Techno fixes him with an exasperated look.

"I'll report you for insubordination if you don't hush," Techno grumbles. Tommy rolls his eyes. "Anyway, what's in the bag? If you're planning on bombing the ship do it when I'm not on break."

Tommy freezes, moving to hide the bag behind his back.

"Nothing," He says a bit too casually, a bit too quickly. Techno pauses, leveling him with a suspicious look.

"You'd better not *actually* be trying to bomb the ship," Techno says, squinting. "Let me see the bag." He says, holding a hand out.

"No!" Tommy says, taking a step back.

"Tommy," Techno says, warning clear in his voice. "Give it."

"*No!*" Tommy repeats, wincing internally at how childish he sounds. Techno takes another step forward and then Tommy is off like a shot, or at least, he tries to be. Techno snags him by the back of his shirt, making Tommy choke for a second before Techno loosens his grip. Techno grabs the bag while Tommy is busy trying to pull the collar of his shirt away from his neck so he doesn't suffocate to death.

Techno lets go of his shirt, making Tommy drop to the ground with a hacking cough.

"What the fuck man!" Tommy snaps. "You don't just *grab* people like that!"

Techno looks at him with something suspiciously close to pity, making Tommy bristle.

"Tommy, you don't have to steal food," Techno says gently, or at least as gently as Techno is capable of sounding. "You can take whatever you want, you don't have to hide it."

"It's- what? Dude, it's not for me!" Tommy sputters. Techno remains unconvinced, glancing down at the bag and then back at Tommy.

"Tommy-" He starts, moving to hand back the bag. Tommy shoves it back to him.

"Christ, it's for *you!*" Tommy snaps, face flushing. This is *not* how he wanted this to go. Techno pauses, eyes flicking to the bag again.

"What?"

"It's for you, *fuck* ! Why do you have to be all weird about it!" Tommy says, taking a few steps back. Techno is silent. "I thought you'd be hungry since you shut yourself up in your lame office all day. It's not a big deal."

Tommy turns to leave, tensing when Techno puts a hand on his shoulder. Here comes the rejection.

"Thanks, Tommy," Techno says quietly, sounding a bit awkward as he always does when expressing any sort of emotion. Tommy blinks in surprise. "I appreciate it."

"Yeah sure, whatever," Tommy scoffs, though he knows there's no hiding the redness of his face. This time, when Tommy takes off down the hall, no one tries to stop him.

---

Tommy returns to his room embarrassed as all hell. The only way that could have gone worse is if Techno got so offended that Tommy dared give him a gift that he convinced Phil to throw him off the ship. Maybe it's a little far-fetched, but it's a possibility. Tubbo would probably fight for him, but there's no way he's letting Tubbo get sent away too.

He collapses back into his chair with a groan, rubbing his neck where his collar had cut into it. If it bruises he'll have to hide it. As emotionless and cold as Techno likes to seem, he'd be guilty if he saw that he had injured Tommy, even slightly, and Tommy does *not* want to deal with Techno apologizing. That man is so emotionally constipated that it would probably take half an hour for Techno to even get the words out.

Tommy sighs, his breath ruffling the papers on his desk. He purses his lips. As badly as his first attempt had gone, he isn't just going to give up less than halfway through. He stands, a tentative determination rising in his chest, and pulls the crumpled papers out from under his mattress.

"See it through," Tommy breathes as he sits down with his papers in front of him. "Gotta see it through."

---

He ended up staying up far too late, once again only being drawn out of his work by Tubbo, though a bit later this time, closer to one in the morning than midnight. Though that's a guess. Tommy really needs to ask Phil to pick up a clock when they're on-planet next.

Tubbo's concern is apparent, worried about Tommy having nightmares again, but Tommy waves off his concern with relative ease. Jokes seem to throw him off his trail, acting as normal as possible. Tommy considers leaving once Tubbo falls asleep, but doesn't want Tubbo to tear the ship apart looking for him if he wakes up and Tommy's gone. It wouldn't be much of a stretch at all if Tubbo assumed Tommy was suffering from another bout of sleepwalking.

So he sleeps, for Tubbo's sake, but it's probably a good thing. He needs to be well-rested to carry out the rest of his plan. The next person he'll be talking to is Wilbur, another low threat. Wilbur is more emotionally driven than Techno, but doesn't have as much power as Phil, and his disgust wouldn't hurt as much as Tubbo's, so there's less risk of Tommy being emotionally gutted.

Tommy rolls over, hugging Henry closer to his chest. He hates this. He hates the fact that anyone has enough power to break his heart. That's never-

Well, it has happened before, and he *did* end up broken-hearted, but that was hardly either of their faults.

Now, he's safer and more secure than he's ever been, and he doesn't want to fuck that up by stupid feelings like *love* getting in the way. He just-

He just *wants*. And that was always going to be his undoing. He wants what he has no business wanting. Things he doesn't need, stuff that would be too easily destroyed by his clumsy hands.

He closes his eyes tight, trying to fall asleep, trying to force his head to be quiet. He focuses on Tubbo's breathing and tries to match it. It works, but his heart is still racing and he still feels like crying.

He doesn't, though, because that would wake Tubbo, and he needs the sleep. Tubbo doesn't need to stay awake to comfort him, he doesn't need to worry about him, he shouldn't have to take care of him. He can take care of himself, he's been doing it for this long, hasn't he?

*'You shouldn't have to take care of yourself,'* Says a voice in his head that sounds suspiciously like Tubbo. Tommy huffs, burying his face in Henry's side to block out the noise.

---

He falls asleep after half an hour of lying still and trying to turn off his mind.

He wakes up in time for breakfast, today, which is an immediate plus. Tubbo is already gone, so he's probably at the table, stealing things from Tommy's plate. Bastard. Tommy sits up with a groan, staring blearily down the hall and to the dining room. He hears his name from the room and is immediately fully awake, walking forward silently and pressing his ear to the door.

"-been acting weird lately," Tubbo is saying, voice hushed like he doesn't want anyone to overhear.

"What do you mean?" Phil asks.

"He's been in his room a lot more than usual, he hasn't been talking to anyone as much, and he's been going to bed later."

"Give him space," Wilbur hums. "He's been through a lot of really traumatic experiences, which we don't even know the extent of, even if he seems to have been handling it well that doesn't mean he won't relapse-"

Tommy can't handle hearing this anymore, he can't stand listening to them talk about how he's too damaged. He slams the door open with the most boisterous greeting he can muster, making everyone jump. He hopes he looks cheerful enough that none of them know he had been listening in.

If they do know, they don't show it, they fall right back into their playful banter and teasing, and once breakfast is over Tommy rushes right back to his room, eager to put the next part of

his plan into action.

---

He misses Tubbo's eyes darting to Tommy's retreating form and then back to Phil, with an expression that says 'see?!'.

So. Wilbur.

The page on phantlings was a little longer than piglins, taking more time to translate, but Tommy got it done. Because he's a fucking genius and a huge man. It was a bit of a disappointment that a majority of the page consisted of information on their physiology rather than their culture, full of warnings about their immensely sensitive skin. Tommy files it away in his brain, but doesn't stop his search for the knowledge he's *actually* trying to find.

And find it he does.

'Phantlings generally bond through quiet company, assistance with their daily tasks, and being physically present. Crew members are recommended to spend at least an hour a day keeping their resident phantling company, or risk resentment forming between members.'

Well, that seems simple enough. Just hang around Wilbur for an hour. Done and done.

---

"Are you *sure* you want to come with me?" Wilbur asks for what feels like the millionth time. Tommy nods, even though his hands are shaking slightly. Wilbur gives him a dubious look and opens the door to his lab.

"Alright..." He drawls, shooting Tommy one more unsure look before opening the door to his lab and stepping inside. Tommy lingers for a second at the doorway, taking a trembling

breath. Wilbur pauses, and Tommy steps inside.

It's...the same as it has been every other time he's been here. There are papers and safety equipment scattered haphazardly across the tables, trash bins full of crumpled papers, and strangely sticky floors. The only difference is that he's here alone.

Well, not alone. He's got Wilbur. But that makes it worse.

Every other time he's been in here there's been some... buffer. Tubbo or Phil or even *Techno* would accompany him, to distract him from the fact that he was back in a place so similar where his life had been completely destroyed.

But he's here. And he has no choice but to bask in that terrible reality. There is no one chattering in his ear, there is no one explaining what each chemical does, there's just Wilbur.

And his stupid lab.

Tommy hates this, but he *told* himself he'd do this. He isn't going to back out, not now. Not after all the work he'd put into figuring out how to get through to Wil. To get him to understand that Tommy's brain has strong-armed him into being family, that Tommy will die for him.

"So, what's on the agenda today big man?" Tommy asks, giving himself a mental pat on the back for the fact that his voice is steady. Wilbur makes a thoughtful rumbling sound, flipping through a stack of papers in his claws.

"Nothing too important," He says, looking a bit disinterested. "I need to check up on some compounds that have been in a hot water bath overnight, and work on extracting an acid."

Tommy nods thoughtfully, as though he understood any of what Wilbur was saying. Wilbur seems to notice his lack of comprehension because he snorts in amusement.

"C'mon, you don't really have to do anything. I was planning on doing some demonstrations anyway, they'll be pretty interesting to watch."

As it turns out, they actually are. Wilbur does some insane chemistry that Tommy can't even begin to understand, and once he swirls the mixture around it makes what looks like a liquid mirror.

"Holy shit," Tommy says, leaning forward to catch his reflection in the curved glass of the beaker. "That's so cool."

"It's really not that complicated," Wilbur says with a chuckle. "It's just silver nitrate dissolved in water, ammonia, and sodium hydroxide."

"I'd call you a nerd, but that was actually sick."

Wilbur's tail flicks in a way that Tommy now knows means pride, and he smiles a little.

"What other stuff can you do?"

---

Apparently, that question was a break in the dam, because Tommy has been in here for hours watching Wilbur do weird science. He's made a puff of black smoke out of what he said was sugar and sulfuric acid and showed him how to make ferrofluid, which Tommy is definitely going to steal some of later to show Tubbo, along with a bunch of other incomprehensible experiments.

It's been about two hours, and surprisingly, Tommy is feeling pretty...okay. He's almost forgotten about where he is, and it's not like he had any bad experiences with *chemistry*, unless you counted the numerous high school classes he had almost failed.

His streak of calm ends abruptly when Wilbur does an experiment involving nitrogen monoxide and something called carbon disulfide. The two compounds are put together in a beaker, producing a flash of blue light and a loud, barking sound.

It's the sound that makes Tommy tense up. He isn't thrown into a flashback, but the noise is... similar to the noise one of the scientists at the old ship made when he was laughing. He was never laughing for good reasons. Wilbur doesn't notice his sudden terror, turning around with

a bright smile. Tommy smiles back, not noticing the way Wilbur's eyes turn concerned at the shakiness in his frame.

"I think that's all we're gonna do today," Wilbur says, stretching his arms above his head.

"But... it's only halfway through the day." Tommy says, following Wilbur as he marches out of the lab. Wilbur shrugs.

"It's lunchtime anyway, and I've gotten everything done that needed to be done."

"I thought you said you needed to check on—"

"They need another day to chill," Wilbur says dismissively, walking purposefully to the dining hall. "Do you want to eat lunch with me?"

"Uh, sure?"

---

Lunch is delicious, some dish from Wilbur's home planet that Tommy has no problem inhaling like it's the last food he'll ever see. Wilbur laughs at his eagerness, though he eats quickly as well, apparently just as fond of the food.

"I take it you're a fan?" Wilbur asks teasingly. Tommy sticks his tongue out and Wilbur scrunched up his face in disgust.

"You are such a gremlin," The phantling groans. Tommy rolls his eyes.

"You don't even know what a gremlin is," Tommy points out.

"I don't need to know, I just know you are one."

"It's a derogatory term and you're being really offensive right now," Tommy says, frowning deeply. Wilbur hesitates, food raised halfway to his mouth, eyes wide, and Tommy bursts out laughing. Wilbur's distress immediately melts into fond irritation, and he throws his hands in the air.

"See, *this* is why you're a gremlin!" He grumbles.

"Oh my God, I can't believe you just called me that," Tommy gasps in between peals of laughter. "You're *so* canceled, I'm writing a twit longer as we speak."

"Stop saying things that make no sense!" Wilbur shrieks, making Tommy laugh harder.

"It makes perfect sense you just aren't bilingual like me," Tommy says haughtily, crossing his arms.

"I am bilingual!" Wilbur insists. "I speak my mother tongue and Common, just like you!"

"You're not *as* bilingual as me," Tommy says matter-of-factly, biting back a smile at the infuriated look that crosses Wilbur's face.

"How could you be *more*- no, you know what. I am not going to be circle-talked by a *human* ." Wilbur says, taking another bite of food. Tommy rolls his eyes.

"Whatever, you- oh, *hey !*" Tommy interrupts himself, getting a sudden idea. "I forgot to ask, but will you teach me how to play your guitar?"

"Guitar?" Wilbur repeats, confused.

"I don't know what it's called- you're uh..." Tommy mimes playing the guitar and Wilbur perks up immediately.

"It's called a polivive, and of *course* I'll teach you," Wilbur says immediately, standing up. Tommy barely has time to scarf down the rest of his food before Wilbur is tugging him down the hall and to his room.

He shows him how to play all the cords, and how to strum without hurting his fingers. It's a little different for him because of the softness of his hands as compared to Wilbur, but by the end of the hour, Tommy can play the scales, and Wilbur is smiling brightly, looking a bit teary-eyed.

"Oh I only played the scales, don't get soft on me now," Tommy grumbles. Wilbur's smile doesn't dim, if anything it only grows brighter. Tommy smirks, he has an idea of how to *actually* make Wilbur cry, and then he'll have blackmail rights forever.

"Look at you, teaching me the polivive," Tommy says, voice full of false innocence. "We're like brothers, you and I."

"Don't say that, I *will* cry," Wilbur says, voice suspiciously thick.

---

Tommy huffs out a laugh, plucking out a random tune, and does his best to ignore the fact that he's telling the truth.

Tubbo comes to get him at midnight again, giving him a concerned look when he sees Tommy bent over his desk for the third night in a row. He doesn't ask any questions, which

Tommy appreciates immensely. He can lie, sure, but he's not sure how well that skill will hold up when faced with Tubbo's disappointed stare.

Tommy sleeps easily, which surprises him. He'd figured that after spending the day in a room that reminded him of the worst part of his life he'd be in for a nightmare-ridden slumber, but he didn't dream at all. He didn't sleepwalk either, according to Tubbo when he wakes Tommy up for breakfast.

He eats with the others, trying to shove down the pangs of nervousness that today's venture involves. It's perhaps the most high-risk attempt at letting the others know that they're family, what with Phil being the captain. If he wants Tommy gone then there's not a lot he can do to stop Phil. He would have tried to win Phil over last, but even with the danger it poses, he's still less nervous about Phil than Tubbo.

That's not to say he's not terrified, and it seems to draw the other's attention, as much as he tries to hide his nerves. They keep giving each other worried looks when they think Tommy's not looking. Tommy has no problem leaving breakfast early to escape from the tension in the air and the silent conversations they're having over his head.

Besides, he needs to get everything ready for Phil.

According to his stolen book, elytrians show love through gifts, typically shiny objects. Tommy hopes jewelry falls into that category.

He walks back to his room as casually as he can, if not a little fast, locks the door behind him to make sure no one walks in on him, and lifts up his mattress. Beneath it sits the book he had taken from Techno, a few pages full of chicken scratch translations, and the object of his focus, a glimmering silver necklace.

Tommy picks it up delicately. He had... *found* it up while they were on-planet last, before Tubbo had almost gotten snatched in the woods, intending on gifting it to Phil. He had chickened out, but that seemed to be a blessing now, as he actually had something *nice* to give to his captain.

Tommy dangles it from his hand, silver chain glinting in the fluorescent light of his room. The charm is large and a bit gaudy, but Tommy likes it. It's a ruby, or some space equivalent, carved into the shape of a heart. There are two inset black stones on the curved part of the heart, forming what look like angry eyes. When Tommy holds it up to the light it practically glows.

Tommy really hopes Phil likes it. He knows birds like shiny things, and that was a big reason he had stolen it in the first place, but he isn't going to tell Phil that. What if being compared to a bird is offensive somehow to elytrians? He lies on his bed with a sigh. Since when did he care about hurting people's feelings? Since when did he care about other people at all? He's going soft. Tommy watches the ruby on the necklace glint in the light and finds that he doesn't mind too much.

---

It takes around forty minutes for Tommy to build up the courage to go to Phil, and another twenty minutes after that for him to actually find the captain.

He's in the cockpit, monitoring... something. Tommy doesn't know, and he doesn't really care to know. He's driven a ship exactly once and he totaled it, he's completely fine with being a passenger.

Tommy lingers in the doorway to the cockpit for a few seconds, hovering with a foot over the threshold, unable to force himself to take the final step inside. Phil notices him, because of course he does, he's the *captain*, how could he not notice the things that happen on his vessel. Tommy freezes, waiting for Phil to tell him to leave. He doesn't. The elytrian just smiles at him in his own weird, alien way, and beckons him over to the control panel.

"Do you wanna come learn how to drive her?" Phil asks. Tommy blinks at him. Why would he want to give him an out like that? Doesn't he know what he did to the other ship?

Phil pats the seat next to him, and Tommy is broken out of his surprised stupor and stumbles forward before sitting gingerly in the offered seat.

"Why?" Tommy asks, trying to find an ulterior motive. Phil hums, tilting his head at Tommy thoughtfully.

"Everyone on the ship knows how to drive it, at least a little, in case something happens to me and you need to get somewhere. You're part of this crew now, you need to learn too."

Tommy nods, clearing his throat a little, trying not to think about how choked up the words '*you're part of this crew now*' make him. If Phil notices his sudden silence, he doesn't say anything, just grabs Tommy gently by the wrist and guides his hands to wrap around what must be the steering wheel of the ship. Tommy tenses immediately, not wanting to move and risk plowing the ship into the side of an asteroid or something. Phil laughs at his sudden stillness.

"It's okay, mate, it's on autopilot right now, I'm just showing you how the controls work," Phil says with a grin. Tommy grins back faintly, a bit embarrassed at his nervousness. He can't really be blamed for his skittishness, though, the last time he had driven a ship he had killed everyone on board and nearly himself in the process.

He shakes himself out of the memory and tightens his grip on the helm.

"Alright," He says, shooting Phil a grin. "How do you fly this bitch?"

---

It's honestly... not as hard as it seems. Sure, the autopilot is on most of the time, but once Phil turns it off Tommy is able to cruise the ship forward and not immediately tank it. Phil looks proud of him, clapping him on the shoulder and beaming. The expression sinks into Tommy's heart, painting the inside of his chest all golden and yellow.

"At this rate you'll be taking my place," Phil jokes. Tommy laughs, even though it's not that funny, and Phil puts the ship back into autopilot. Tommy lets go of the helm and clenches and unclenches his hands, trying to get feeling back into them from how tightly he had been holding on to the wheel.

"Uh, Phil?" Tommy says, voice sounding traitorously young. He reaches for his pocket where the necklace is nestled. There's no going back now, no time to pussy out.

"Yeah Tommy?"

Tommy's hand pulls out of his pocket, empty. He can't do this.

"Nothing, Phil, just- thank you. For... for everything." Tommy turns to leave but Phil snags his sleeve, holding him in place.

"Tommy," Phil says, voice painfully parental. "What's up?"

Tommy's resolve cracks, and he reaches back for his pocket, pulling out the necklace and dangling it by its chain so it glints beautifully. Phil's eyes widen when they catch the gem, gaze flicking up to Tommy's face once he processes what it is he's looking at.

"Tommy..." Phil says softly, staring at the necklace like it's something holy. Something to be treasured. Tommy didn't think it was *that* expensive looking. Shit, is he gonna have some shopkeeper after his ass for stealing some priceless treasure?

"It's for you," Tommy blurts out, not looking Phil in the eyes, just shoving the jewelry to his captain.

Phil grabs the necklace, lifting it reverently and lowering it over his head, leaving the gem to rest in the center of his chest, right beside where his heart would be if he was human. Tommy's eyes follow the gentle swinging of the gem for a few seconds before Phil speaks, drawing Tommy's attention back to his captain's face.

"Thank you, Tommy," Phil says, voiced hushed and a bit raw. "I'll wear it all the time." Tommy shrugs, face bright red as he stares at the ground. Phil pulls him into a hug, wings wrapping around him protectively. Tommy couldn't stop himself from melting into the hug if he tried, and he wraps his arms around his captain in turn, feeling where the heavy stone presses against his chest.

Phil lets go, looking a bit teary.

"I'm glad we found you, Tommy." He says quietly. Tommy scoffs, ignoring how wet his voice sounds even to his own ears.

"I found *you* , " Tommy corrects. Phil huffs a laugh, adjusting his wings.

"That you did," Phil says, nodding, a habit he picked up from Tommy. "That you did."

---

Phil's gift went... insanely well. Better than any of the others, even Wilbur. Now the only one he has to tell is... Tubbo.

Who also happens to be the one he's most scared of telling.

He heads back to his room, not to research or translate this time, just to hide from anyone who may confront him. He's aware his behavior has been strange these past few days, but it's not like he can tell the crew his real reasons he's been holing himself up in his room and only coming out a few hours a day, and then only to have strange, awkward interactions with the crew.

Tubbo shows up again at midnight, hopefully for the last time, if all goes well. Or if things go poorly, it'll also be the last time Tubbo lets him sleep in his room. Tommy hopes things go well.

If Tubbo notices the way Tommy is being strangely silent, he doesn't say anything. Tommy hopes he thinks Tommy is just tired, not clued in to the storm currently rushing through Tommy's head.

---

Tommy had fallen asleep easily, much to his surprise. The stress of the day had once again knocked him out, and he slept without nightmares. When Tommy wakes up, Tubbo is gone again, though it is a bit earlier than he usually wakes up considering he had gone to bed relatively early. It wouldn't be out of the ordinary for Tubbo to be up washing his face or whatever it is apisaids do to get ready for the day.

Tommy groans and rolls out of bed. If he's up this early he may as well help Phil with breakfast.

As he ambles down the hall, silent on socked feet, he hears speaking in the kitchen once again. He pauses, gnawing on his lip, and presses his ear to the door once again. He doesn't know if they really *are* talking about him, but if they are... he feels like he needs to listen.

"-what you needed to get?" Phil asks, voice hushed. Tommy leans in further.

"Yeah," Techno's gruff voice replies. "Found this under his mattress."

Tommy freezes, blood rushing from his face. He has a feeling they aren't planning him a surprise party. Phil makes a noise that Tommy doesn't know the meaning of yet.

"Oh..." Wilbur says, sounding soft. "So-"

"Yeah, I think so," Tubbo says, and Tommy *wishes* he was better at understanding tone in Common, but he's not and he can't *tell* if they're angry with him. He's sure Techno is at least, he *did* go through his drawers and steal his stuff.

There is a long silence from the kitchen, making Tommy tense, ready to bolt. Then Wilbur speaks.

"Techno, you look like you're about to *cry*!" Wilbur crows, laughter filling his voice. Tommy winces. He didn't think Techno would be *that* upset about the book.

"Don't act like you didn't burst into my room sobbing yesterday because Tommy could play the scales," Techno grits out, voice a bit choked up.

"He said we were like brothers," Wilbur says defensively.

"So *this* is why he's been acting so...off this week," Tubbo says thoughtfully. "I'm gonna go get him, be subtle, I don't want him to know we know, he'd be embarrassed." Tommy hears footsteps approaching the door but is too caught up in the terror and shame of being found out to back away, to hide.

The door slides, open and Tubbo is standing on the other side. He hasn't seen Tommy yet, head turned to face the others, still standing in the kitchen. The others have noticed him, staring at him with wide eyes.

"Techno, don't forget to put the book back so-" Tubbo turns and spots Tommy. The apaisaid freezes in place, looking up at Tommy, both equally stunned at the other's presence.

"Tommy-" Tubbo starts, reaching out, but Tommy is off, darting down the halls away from the shouts of his... his crew. He should never have done this. This is why he took so many backroads to tell them he loved them. He ducks into a storage closet, slamming the door

behind him and barring it with a crate. He collapses into the corner, tucking his knees to his chest and hugging them tight to his body.

Why did he think this was a good idea? He's a *human*. Even on Earth he was unwanted, but up here? In space? He never stood a chance. He should have just accepted his lot in life instead of trying to be part of something he's not.

He sniffls, feeling tears run down his face. He can distantly hear the crew banging on the door, shouting to be let in, but Tommy won't. He needs to stay in here until he's brave enough to leave and accept whatever punishment they dole out for stealing Techno's shit. For going behind their backs and acting like something he's not.

For being something he is.

Tommy chokes back another sob, but he doesn't have any more time for self-pity, because there is a thudding sound above his head, making him freeze, staring up at the ceiling. The thudding comes closer and closer, sounding an awful lot like crawling.

The vent hatch swings open, and Tubbo drops out, hitting the ground with a small 'oof' and rubs his head before turning to look at Tommy.

Tommy wants to laugh at the fact that Tubbo is absolutely *covered* in dust, but he's a little busy with the fact that his heart feels like it's trying to pound out of his chest.

"I don't know how you lived like this for a week," Tubbo jokes, shaking the dust from his coat. "I could barely breathe up there with all that dust."

Tubbo looks at him and seems to notice Tommy's terrified expression, eyes wide and breathing unnaturally fast.

"Tommy..." Tubbo says, sounding sad. He moves forward. Tommy tries to move back, but only succeeds in pressing himself further into the wall. Tubbo sits in front of him, a few feet away so he isn't crowding Tommy. Why is he still showing kindness? There's no way Tommy gets out of this without either being shoved back in a cell or humiliated so thoroughly that he wishes he had been.

"I'm sorry for stealing Techno's shit," He mutters into his knees. Tubbo doesn't say anything, and like hell Tommy is gonna look at him to see what expression he's wearing.

"Tommy, he never even read that book, it's mandated to have by the Council. He couldn't give less of a shit."

Tommy risks a glace up at Tubbo. He doesn't look angry, he's just sitting down, hands on his knees, looking at Tommy in concern.

"No one's mad at you," Tubbo says matter of factly, but how can that be true, when he's fucked up so grandly. "You were... were you trying to figure out how to tell us you love us?"

Tommy flinches back, but when he looks up again Tubbo gaze is only filled with fondness. If Tommy was a bit braver, he'd say he sees love glinting in his dark eyes.

"...I- I didn't want to- you guys all seem so... *right* together. I couldn't risk fucking that up," Tommy says raspily. Tubbo makes a heartbroken noise in the back of his throat.

"Tommy, let me tell you a secret," Tubbo says, scooting up so he's sitting beside Tommy. The human makes room instinctively. "When Phil say's 'crew', he actually means 'flock'. That's the elytrian way of saying family," Tubbo clarifies at Tommy's blank expression.

Tommy turns his head toward the wall so Tubbo can't see the tears rising up.

"Oh," He says a bit shakily.

"You've part of this family for a long time," Tubbo says. Tommy can tell that he means it. He may not do too well at understanding tone but he can understand this. "I'm sorry we didn't tell you sooner, we didn't know if you'd want that, considering your circumstances."

Tommy leans into Tubbo's shoulder.

"That's stupid," Tommy says. "You should have just told me."

"Tommy," Tubbo says, deadpan. "You've spent the last week translating papers late into the night so you could figure out the best way to tell us you love us without actually saying it."

There are a few seconds of silence.

"Touché bitch." Tommy says.

"C'mon, let's go back to the others, I think they're getting worried," Tubbo says standing and pulling Tommy to his feet. Tommy groans.

"Noooo, that was so *embarrassing* ." Tommy whines. Tubbo rolls his eyes, unmoved, and tugs Tommy to the door. Tommy pushes the crate away from the entrance with only a bit of exertion, letting Tubbo open the door and reveal the worried faces of the crew, all crowded around the door. Well, Wilbur and Phil look worried, Techno looks as impassive as always. Phil scoops him into a hug, and as always Tommy relaxes into it. Tommy feels Tubbo wrap his arms around him too, and then Wilbur throws his arms around both Phil and Tommy.

Tubbo shoots a ferocious glare at Techno, and the piglin caves, slotting himself awkwardly into the group hug. Tommy gives a wet laugh and the arms around him tighten.

"You're our family, Tommy." Philza murmurs. "I'm sorry we didn't tell you that sooner."

"It's fine," Tommy mutters back. "You got a necklace out of the deal didn't you."

Phil chuckles a bit but doesn't let go. None of them do. The five of them stay huddled together for a good few minutes, settling the restlessness that had made a home in Tommy's chest, if only for a little while.

This is nice, Tommy decides. He really should have had a family sooner.

## Chapter End Notes

Thats the end of this installment! There will be more, don't even worry. I plan on writing a couple more stories in this universe, introducing some new characters and such. Subscribe to the series if you don't wanna miss an update, or just to my account in general!

check out my tumblr linked below for wips and bonus content of this au, and remember to comment!! i am holding my writing hostage for more comments.



## End Notes

Howdy! If you liked this chapter, leave a comment! It's a surefire way to get more writing out of me \*wink\*

ALSO if you like this fic and this au you can check out my tumblr for bonus content and send asks about the world if you want! Theres also art by me and some other really cool people

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